

The Honorable Robert S. Lasnik
The Honorable David G. Estudillo
The Honorable Lawrence VanDyke

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE**

SUSAN SOTO PALMER et al.,

Plaintiffs,

V.

STEVEN HOBBS, in his official capacity as Secretary of State of Washington, et al.,

Defendants,

and

JOSE TREVINO et al.,

Intervenor-Defendants.

Case No.: 3:22-cv-5035-RSL

INTERVENOR-DEFENDANTS' WRITTEN CLOSING ARGUMENT¹

BENANCIO GARCIA III.

Plaintiff,

V.

STEVEN HOBBS, in his official capacity as Secretary of State of Washington, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No.: 3:22-cv-5152-RSL-DGE-LJCV

PLAINTIFF'S WRITTEN CLOSING ARGUMENT¹

¹ This Written Closing Argument is being filed concurrently in both *Soto Palmer v. Hobbs*, No. 3:22-cv-5035, and *Garcia v. Hobbs*, No. 3:22-cv-5152.

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INTRODUCTION

This case is about map drawing. What is required by law, and what is not. What this Court can do, as regards to remedy, and what it cannot. How the State’s redistricting Commissioners negotiated, and how they did not.

The Fourteenth Amendment prohibits redistricting on the basis of race, except in the extraordinary circumstance where there is good reason to believe the Voting Rights Act (“VRA”) might so require. But the VRA does not require a Democratic-majority district in the Yakima Valley, nor did the Washington State Redistricting Commission (“Commission”) have good reason to believe so at the time it drew its maps. This Court, under current law and the factual record created at trial, can—and should—order the Commission to redraw a map without considering race. However, this Court cannot legally require the Commission to draw a district that guarantees a certain partisan outcome. The members of the Commission (“Commissioners”) negotiated in good faith to reach a reasoned compromise, using race as a *sine qua non* criterion, but they did not conspire to dilute Hispanic voting power in the Yakima Valley region.

Mr. Garcia asks for a map of Legislative District 15 (“LD-15”) that does not sort Washington voters on the basis of their race or ethnicity but, instead, relies on traditional, race-neutral, districting criteria. Such a map is achievable.

Plaintiffs² ask for something novel—not a majority-Hispanic district, or even a majority Hispanic district by citizen voting age population (“CVAP”), which already exists in LD-15. Rather, what Plaintiffs have requested throughout this whole process is a map that would guarantee Democratic candidates would be elected in a different majority-minority district, as proposed by them and based on their tenuous allegation that Hispanics in the Yakima region vote cohesively for Democratic candidates—which here would mean the VRA requires that a Democrat win practically every election in LD-15. Asking for a new district where a CVAP majority-minority already exists is a novel claim. It is unclear whether VRA Section 2 jurisprudence even

² To avoid undue repetition, this brief uses the term “Plaintiffs” to refer to the *Soto Palmer* Plaintiffs only. The Plaintiff in the *Garcia* case is referred to as “Mr. Garcia” or “the *Garcia* Plaintiff.”

1 applies to this claim, considering the *Gingles* preconditions are premised on the region's minority
 2 population *lacking* a majority voting-age population in a district. Here, however, Hispanics in LD-
 3 15 already represent a majority of the citizen voting age population, possess equal and easy access
 4 to the polls (complete with bilingual voting materials), and thus have the opportunity to elect a
 5 candidate of their choice by voting as a bloc. This alone should defeat the Section 2 claim.

6 Plaintiffs' alleged injury is that Democratic candidates cannot win in LD-15 under the
 7 version of the district enacted by the Commission ("Enacted Plan"). Their redress, then, can only
 8 be a map where Democratic candidates are assured to win. At trial, they did not show such a map
 9 can exist within the confines of the law. This Court can neither draw, nor order drawn, a
 10 Democratic-performing map that complies with the law. Even if redressability were realistic,
 11 Plaintiffs failed to satisfy each *Gingles* precondition, because of basic misunderstandings by
 12 experts of compactness and the variances in racial voting that depend on the identity of the
 13 candidates. And, above all, Plaintiffs failed to show that, looking at all the facts on the ground,
 14 Hispanic voters in the Yakima Valley region are denied an equal opportunity to participate in the
 15 political process. This Court could dismiss the *Soto Palmer* claims as non-redressable or deny
 16 them on the merits; in either event, it is impossible to draw a map that comports with both
 17 Plaintiffs' requested remedy and the law.

18 *Garcia* offers a cleaner case and remedy. Trial confirmed that the Commissioners used
 19 Hispanic ethnicity as the essential condition of their negotiations over LD-15. Race was the
 20 uncompromisable criterion—explicitly and admittedly so. The Commissioners did not conduct
 21 any serious analysis on their own, or through experts retained by the Commission as an entity, to
 22 determine if such race-sorting was reasonably required by the VRA. The Democratic expert
 23 brought in by the Senate Democratic Caucus to advise the Democratic Commissioners provided
 24 only an anemic and conclusory PowerPoint presentation that came nowhere near the stringent
 25 evidentiary threshold required to satisfy a strong basis in evidence, as demanded by Fourteenth
 26 Amendment under the relevant strict scrutiny standard. Plaintiff Garcia respectfully requests that
 27

1 a special session of the Legislature reconvene the Commission for the purpose of redrawing the
 2 Yakima area legislative districts without sorting Hispanics on the basis of their ethnicity.

3 **BACKGROUND**

4 Although the basic facts of this case have been described in depth and needs no repetition
 5 here, some confusion arose during trial with respect to several factual matters—namely, the
 6 geographic scope, meaning and application of “Yakima,” and the process by which the
 7 Commission submits its final maps to the Legislature and how such maps may be amended.
 8 Additionally, the United States Supreme Court’s opinion in *Allen v. Milligan*, 599 U.S. ___, 143
 9 S. Ct. 1487 (2023), was issued shortly after the trial concluded and prompts a preliminary aside.

10 First, the Parties need to define their terms. Both the State and Plaintiffs used “Yakima” to
 11 mean different things at different times to support their legal conclusions. For example, the State
 12 suggested that *Montes v. City Yakima*, 40 F. Supp. 3d 1377 (E.D. Wash. 2014), found racially
 13 polarized voting in “Yakima,” and therefore could put the Commissioners on notice that *Gingles*
 14 preconditions were met for VRA districting purposes in “Yakima.” See Trial Tr. 499:16-18 (Fain:
 15 The State asking if *Montes* found racially polarized voting in “Yakima”). But those are not the
 16 same Yakimas. Semantics matter here—there is the *City* of Yakima (at issue in and limiting the
 17 scope of *Montes*), there is *Yakima County*, and there is the greater Yakima *region* at issue in these
 18 cases (periodically called by the other parties “Southcentral Washington” or the “Five-County
 19 Area,” of which the *Yakima Valley* forms a part). It is the last—and largest—of these that is the
 20 locus of this litigation. The questions about the legislative district in “Yakima” are about the whole
 21 five-county area in Southcentral Washington, which includes the Yakima Valley and regions
 22 beyond (like Othello and the Tri-Cities). The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the City of Yakima
 23 has approximately 97,000 residents, whereas the Yakima County alone—just one part of the five-
 24 county area—boasts an estimated 257,000 inhabitants, making it bizarre and misleading to conflate
 25 the two. See *Quick Facts*, U.S. Census Bureau, Yakima city, Washington,
 26 <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/yakimacitywashington/PST045222> (last accessed
 27 July 12, 2023); *Quick Facts*, U.S. Census Bureau, Yakima County, Washington,

1 <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/yakimacountywashington> (last accessed July 12, 2023);

2 Throughout this brief, we will be careful to delineate which is which.

3 Second, under Washington law, the Commission is the exclusive body responsible for
 4 redistricting. *See WASH. CONST. art. II, § 43(11)* (“Legislative and congressional districts may not
 5 be changed or established except pursuant to [article II, section 43 of the Washington
 6 Constitution].”). The Legislature’s authority is quite limited with respect to redistricting: “Upon
 7 approval of a redistricting plan,” the Commission “shall submit the plan to the legislature,” which
 8 may only amend the Commission’s plan within the first thirty days of the next regular or special
 9 legislative session by “an affirmative vote in each house of two-thirds of the members elected or
 10 appointed thereto.” RCW 44.05.100(1)–(2); *see also WASH. CONST. art. II, § 43(7)*. Amendment
 11 or no amendment, the map becomes law at the end of the thirty days. *See WASH. CONST. art. II, §*
 12 *43(7); RCW 44.05.100(3)*. The Legislature’s authority to amend the Commission’s plan is
 13 circumscribed, as any change “may not include more than two percent of the population of any
 14 legislative . . . district.” RCW 44.05.100(2).

15 In 2022, the Legislature only amended LD-15 by adding seven census blocks and removing
 16 two, with no net population change to the Commission-approved map. *See H. Con. Res. 4407,*
 17 *67th Leg., Reg. Sess.*, at 2:35–36, 71:9–77:26 (Wash. 2022) (“HCR 4407”). The adjustments made
 18 to other districts were similarly minor, with the gross population change across all 49 legislative
 19 districts totaling just 980 people. *See id.* at 2:5–4:4. During the legislative debate on the measure
 20 amending the Enacted Plan, House Majority Leader Pat Sullivan described the changes as:

21 technical in nature and really important that we get that done. . . . As a legislature,
 22 we really have two options in this redistricting process. If we do nothing, then the
 23 maps come into being without our vote. But they come into being without those
 24 changes that were recommended by the county commissioners. By making these—
 25 by adopting this resolution, we adopt the maps as well as the changes that were
 26 suggested by the county commissioners, which are important to get done.

27 Trial Ex. 1065, at 3:19. Likewise, Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig said the measure:

is not an approval of the redistricting map and the redistricting plans; it’s not an
 endorsement of that plan. The Legislature does not have the power to approve, or
 endorse, the redistricting plan that the Redistricting Commission approved. What
 we do have the power to do is to make minor changes. And that brings us to what

1 this resolution does. This resolution makes over 70 small changes to the
 2 redistricting plan. They're minor, mostly technical changes. Almost all of them
 3 were recommend by the county auditors, who are the local elections officials. And
 4 they help to make the maps work better.

5 Trial Ex. 126, at 0:55. These modest technical amendments by the Legislature in 2022 are typical
 6 of the Legislature's historic approach to exercising its limited amendatory authority—in 2012, for
 7 example, the Legislature's revisions to the 2011 Commission's legislative plan resulted in a gross
 8 population change of 472. *See H. Con. Res. 4409*, 62nd Leg., Reg. Sess., at 2:1–4:4 (Wash 2012).

9 Lastly, the day after trial ended, the Supreme Court handed down *Allen v. Milligan*, 599
 10 U.S. ___. The Court did not alter Section 2's *Gingles* factors jurisprudence, instead reaffirming
 11 the old standard. *Milligan*, slip op. at 15–16. *Milligan*'s conclusions regarding Alabama's
 12 congressional redistricting by its own express terms have nothing to add here. That's because the
 13 “application of the *Gingles* factors is ‘peculiarly dependent upon the facts of each case.’” *Id.*, slip
 14 op. at 11 (citing *Thornburg v. Gingles*, 478 U.S. 30, 79 (1986)). Section 2 determinations must
 15 each be their own, and this Court is free—in fact, required—to make its own “intensely local
 16 appraisal.” *Id.* (quoting *Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 79).

17 Washington is not Alabama, Yakima is not Mobile, and *Soto Palmer* is not *Milligan*.
 18 *Milligan* makes no changes to the legal standards binding this Court, and *Milligan*'s “intensely
 19 local” *Gingles* preconditions findings are limited to its unique circumstances, like all Section 2
 20 claims. *Milligan* is merely about Alabama's suggested race-neutral benchmark theory. *Id.*, slip op.
 21 at 15 (“The heart of these cases is not about the law as it exists. It is about Alabama's attempt to
 22 remake our §2 jurisprudence anew. The centerpiece of the State's effort is what it calls the ‘race-
 23 neutral benchmark.’”). That concept has no relevance to this case, as no party has proffered any
 24 argument about a “race-neutral benchmark” for redistricting in the Yakima region.

25 Nonetheless, *Milligan* does reaffirm the baselines for the preconditions, including that
 26 “compactness” refers to the compactness of the minority community. *Id.*, slip op. at 10. But most
 27 importantly, the *Milligan* Court reminds the judiciary of what these claims are all about—whether
 28 the minority community has equal access to the political process. *Id.*, slip op. at 5.

ARGUMENT

I. At trial, Plaintiffs did not explain how a remedy map would be “substantially likely” to redress their alleged harm—*i.e.*, that a Democratic-performing HCVAP-majority district can legally be drawn in the Yakima Valley.

As noted above, Plaintiffs are claiming an injury that Hispanic voters in the Yakima Valley region cannot elect a Democrat, their purported candidate of choice. While Plaintiffs avoid saying so explicitly—doing so would highlight a significant legal shortcoming of their claims—this can be readily inferred from their experts’ reports. *See, e.g.*, Trial Ex. 1, at 14–15 figs. 3–4 (analyzing Latino-preferred candidates in nine races, each of which candidate ran as a Democrat); Trial Ex. 2, at 4 fig. 1 (estimating the Democratic candidate in LD-15 state senate race was Latino-preferred).

In this Circuit, to establish Article III redressability, plaintiffs must show that the relief they seek is *both* (1) substantially likely to redress their injuries and (2) within the district court’s power to award. *See Juliana v. United States*, 947 F.3d 1159, 1170 (9th Cir. 2020). In redistricting cases, a district court’s “remedial authority” in ordering a remedial map is limited to ensuring plaintiffs are relieved of the “injuries the plaintiffs established” from legislative districts. *See North Carolina v. Covington*, 585 U.S. ___, 138 S. Ct. 2548, 2554 (2018) (per curiam). As such, Plaintiffs must show evidence that it would be “likely, as opposed to merely speculative,” that a remedy map would redress their harm—meaning, elect the Democratic candidates they allege Latino voters prefer—and that this Court can legally do so. *E.g., Friends of the Earth, Inc. v. Laidlaw Envtl. Servs. (TOC), Inc.*, 528 U.S. 167, 180–81 (2000); *Haaland v. Brackeen*, 599 U. S. ___, slip op. at 32 (2023) (“It is a federal court’s judgment, not its opinion, that remedies an injury; thus it is the judgment, not the opinion, that demonstrates redressability.”).

At trial, Plaintiffs failed to show the Court that their requested remedy was possible. *See, e.g., Lujan v. Defs. of Wildlife*, 504 U.S. 555, 561 (1992) (explaining that “the Plaintiff bears the burden” to establish redressability at all “successive stages of the litigation,” including “by the evidence adduced at trial”). Here, trial did not show how to craft a remedy that elects Democratic candidates in the Yakima region—based on the 2022 results—without breaking apart the Yakama

1 Nation, packing Hispanic Democratic voters from other districts, and making those districts less
 2 competitive, including in districts with large Hispanic communities, possibly violating both federal
 3 and Washington law. *See United States v. Texas*, 599 U.S. ___, slip op. at 22 (2023) (Gorsuch, J.,
 4 concurring) (“[T]he remedy that would ordinarily have the best chance of redressing the States’
 5 harms is a forbidden one in this case.”). And to the extent that Plaintiffs’ claim is naught more than
 6 a request that this Court craft partisan judicial relief, that request—VRA dressing
 7 notwithstanding—is not justiciable in federal court. *See Rucho v. Common Cause*, 588 U.S. ___,
 8 139 S. Ct. 2484 (2019).

9 Plaintiffs did not establish at trial just how many more Democratic-leaning voters would
 10 need to be packed into LD-15 to allow it to perform for Democratic candidates. After all, the
 11 Commissioners originally thought LD-15 in the Enacted Plan would lean Republican by only a
 12 few percentage points. *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 476:17–477:1, 747:16–23. Commissioner Sims even
 13 testified that she considered LD-15 “a swing district” that Republicans “would [not] necessarily
 14 win” and could “flip” with “enough organizing.” Trial Tr. 279:6–23. Yet in the 2022 general
 15 election state senate race—the only contested legislative election to have occurred in the LD-15
 16 enacted district—the Republican candidate defeated her Democratic opponent by thirty-five
 17 points. *See Trial Ex. 1055*. Despite this election taking place almost concurrently with the drafting
 18 of expert reports in *Soto Palmer*, not a single expert for Plaintiffs examined if, in light of the 2022
 19 general election, a Democratic-performing district could even be drawn in the Yakima Valley. *See,*
 20 *e.g.*, Trial Ex. 2.

21 Furthermore, Plaintiffs’ expert Dr. Collingwood explained that he had no idea if it was
 22 even possible to draw a majority-Hispanic district that both performs for Democrats and keeps the
 23 Yakama Nation intact. *See Trial Tr. 89:11–17*. Any remedy map ordered by this Court would likely
 24 break up the Yakama Nation, causing community of interest problems—not to mention
 25 overturning the express desires of the Yakama Nation, *see, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 87:7–20, that the
 26 Commission incorporated into the Enacted Plan following its first-ever formal tribal consultation
 27 policy, *see, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 338:9–21, 756:12–19.

1 Relatedly, both of Dr. Barreto’s “VRA Compliant” maps, *see* Trial Ex. 179, at 22–23,
 2 Plaintiffs’ three “demonstrative plans” analyzed by Dr. Collingwood, *see* Trial Ex. 1, at 22–24
 3 figs. 8–10, and the remedial map sought by Plaintiffs in conjunction with their motion for
 4 preliminary injunction, (*see Soto Palmer* Dkt. # 54-1 at 3), were based on older, now-obsolete
 5 electoral estimates. At trial, Plaintiffs failed to update their alternative maps with the new electoral
 6 results from 2022, calling into question whether any of their proposed maps would come even
 7 close to electing a Democrat. It was their burden to do so, and their silence on the matter renders
 8 their requested relief merely speculative at best and completely unattainable at worst.

9 To be fair, the 2022 election put Plaintiffs in a tough spot. They were left with two options
 10 at trial: (1) stay silent on the 2022 election, leaving to speculation whether any of their proposed
 11 maps would still elect a Democratic candidate; or (2) provide supplements and remove all doubt
 12 that their proposed remedial maps could not perform for Democratic candidates. Plaintiffs chose
 13 the former.

14 Several witnesses were queried extensively about Dave’s Redistricting at trial. The Court,
 15 using what we now know from the 2022 state senate election, could use that website to attempt to
 16 create its own remedial map (since the Plaintiffs’ various maps do not do the trick) based on
 17 Plaintiffs’ request for a majority-Hispanic CVAP district in the greater Yakima region that reliably
 18 elects Democrats. The result would be an ugly, spindly, vortex-shaped district, stealing minority
 19 populations with little in common³ from neighboring districts and packing them into the new
 20 district. If a 52 or 53 percent HCVAP district cannot come close to electing a Democrat,⁴ it would
 21 require a massive influx of Hispanic voters to raise the HCVAP high enough to elect a Democrat.
 22 This would result in bizarre shapes, partisan imbalance, racial sorting, and more in violation of the
 23

24 ³ Indeed, even aside from the question—discussed *infra* Part II.B.1—of what Hispanic voters in urban Yakima,
 25 agrarian Othello, suburban Pasco and the small towns along the Yakima River have in common with each other, all
 26 six demonstrative maps produced by Plaintiffs would draw some or all of the Yakama Indian Reservation into a
 27 majority HCVAP district, without any analysis of what Native American voters have in common with Hispanic voters
 other than an apparent tendency to prefer Democratic candidates.

⁴ The Enacted Plan was originally calculated to have a 51.5% HCVAP, but many agree it’s likely more than that today.
See, e.g., Trial Tr. 279:24–280:16.

1 Fourteenth Amendment and the Washington Constitution. A “redress” to one violation that
 2 violates other laws is no redress at all.

3 After the 2022 election (when the Republican candidate defeated the Democratic candidate
 4 by 35 points in the only contested election to be held in the new LD-15) and after trial (where
 5 Plaintiffs failed to present any necessary evidence), this Court cannot look at Plaintiffs’ proposed
 6 or demonstrative maps and conclude that any of them is “reasonably likely” to elect a Democrat.
 7 Therefore, this Court does not have the ability to give judicial relief to Plaintiffs.

8 The *Garcia* prayer for relief creates a helpful contrast. The remedial map for Mr. Garcia’s
 9 claim would simply order the map drawers to create legislative districts without ethnic thresholds
 10 as the predominant criterion. The Article III harm alleged by Mr. Garcia was that he and others
 11 were racially sorted, and a remedial map could be drawn that does not resort to racial sorting. Such
 12 a map could be drawn quite easily to respect partisan competitiveness in accordance with the
 13 Washington Constitution, traditional redistricting criteria like maintaining communities of interest
 14 (including Yakama Nation), and the VRA. Any map doing what Plaintiffs demand could not
 15 satisfy all (or even any) of those criteria.⁵

16 **II. Under the *Gingles* two-step analysis, LD-15 does not thwart the Hispanic vote by 17 submerging it in a larger White voting population.**

18 To prevail on their effects claim, Plaintiffs must satisfy all three *Gingles* preconditions: (1)
 19 the minority group must be sufficiently large and geographically compact to constitute a majority
 20 in a reasonably configured district; (2) the minority group must be able to show that it is politically
 21 cohesive; and (3) the minority must be able to demonstrate that the white majority votes
 22 sufficiently as a bloc to enable it to defeat the minority’s preferred candidate. *E.g., Milligan*, slip
 23
 24

25 ⁵ It should be noted that the inability of Plaintiffs to produce an adequate remedial map has been found by the Eleventh
 26 Circuit to be a part of the merits “*Gingles* threshold inquiry whether [the district court] can fashion a permissible
 27 remedy in the particular context of the challenged system.” *Nipper v. Smith*, 39 F.3d 1494, 1531 (11th Cir. 1994). The
 Ninth Circuit acknowledged *Nipper* but neither rejected nor adopted its *Gingles* no-remedy approach, *see Earl Old Person v. Brown*, 312 F.3d 1036, 1050-51 (9th Cir. 2002), leaving this Court free to hold that the impossibility of a
 remedy here defeats Plaintiffs’ claim either jurisdictionally or on the *Gingles* merits.

1 op. at 10. Should the Plaintiffs demonstrate all three, they must also show, under the totality of the
 2 circumstances, that the political process is not equally open to minority voters. *Id.*

3 **A. LD-15 is already a majority Hispanic CVAP district where Hispanics have
 equal access to voting, so Hispanic voters have the opportunity to choose
 whatever candidate they preferred if they voted as a bloc.**

5 Before proceeding to the *Gingles* preconditions, the Court may simply hold that, as a matter
 6 of sound logic, Hispanic voters have equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process and
 7 elect candidates as they choose because LD-15 is already majority Hispanic by CVAP. It is at best
 8 unclear how the *Gingles* preconditions apply to a district like LD-15. Each *Gingles* precondition
 9 refers to the “minority” group, based on the implicit assumption that the minority group in question
 10 lacks a majority of the voting population—hence the group’s lack of opportunity to elect a
 11 candidate of choice and the need for a remedy under Section 2 of the VRA. *See id.* But here, white
 12 voters in LD-15 are in the minority. Plaintiffs therefore are turning *Gingles* jurisprudence on its
 13 head; and were the Court to accept their claims, virtually all the case law built around the
 14 majority/minority distinction would need to be reworked.

15 Plaintiffs aver LD-15’s majority-minority CVAP is merely a “façade,” but the façade
 16 district discussed in the sole Supreme Court case they cite raised concerns because the district at
 17 issue in that case was majority *HVAP*, but not majority HCVAP. *See LULAC v. Perry*, 548 U.S.
 18 399, 429, 441 (2006). There, the Supreme Court found the Latino district to be a “façade” because
 19 the State intentionally drew the district to have a nominal Latino *voting-age majority* “without a
 20 *citizen* voting-age majority.” *Id.* at 441 (emphasis added). That is not the case here. Rather, the
 21 Commission did draw a Hispanic *citizen* voting-age majority district in LD-15. The whole point
 22 underlying *Perry*’s “façade” holding is that an HCVAP-majority district was missing.
 23 Consequently, Plaintiffs’ whole façade theory falls apart.

24 Also, the Supreme Court has elsewhere stated that the Section 2 showings “are needed to
 25 establish that the challenged districting thwarts a distinctive minority vote by submerging it in a
 26 *larger white* voting population.” *Growe v. Emison*, 507 U.S. 25, 40 (1993) (emphasis added); *see also Cooper v. Harris*, 581 U.S. 285, 302 (2017) (quoting *Growe*’s “*larger white* voting

1 population” language). Again, that’s not the case here; the Hispanic voting population (that is, the
 2 CVAP) is the larger voting population in LD-15.

3 As at least one circuit court has reasoned, as long as a minority group has “equal access to
 4 the polls and in fact represent[s] a majority of those eligible to vote in a majority of the election
 5 districts relevant to the governmental body at issue, the rights afforded by the . . . Voting Rights
 6 Acts are satisfied.” *Smith v. Brunswick Cty.*, 984 F.2d 1393, 1402 (4th Cir. 1993); *see also Perry*,
 7 548 U.S. at 428 (“[T]he ultimate right of § 2 is equality of opportunity, not a guarantee of electoral
 8 success”) (quoting *Johnson v. De Grandy*, 512 U.S. 997, 1014 n.11 (1994)).

9 Following the logic of that approach—and with no contrary imperative from the Ninth
 10 Circuit—this Court should hold that, because LD-15 is a majority Hispanic CVAP district, the
 11 district’s Hispanic population does not have “less opportunity to participate in the political process,
 12 and to elect representatives of [its] choice.” *Earl Old Person v. Brown*, 312 F.3d 1066, 1041 (9th
 13 Cir. 2002). “Though it may be possible for a citizen voting-age majority to lack real electoral
 14 opportunity,” *Perry*, 548 U.S. at 428, that is not the case here. Witnesses at trial presented no
 15 evidence that Hispanics lack “equal access to the polls,” *Smith*, 984 F.2d at 1402. On the contrary,
 16 Mses. Lopez and Soto Palmer and Mr. Portugal all testified as to the ease of registering to vote,
 17 receiving their (bilingual) election materials by mail, and casting their ballot. *See* Trial Tr. 37:24–
 18 38:11 (Lopez); 299:4–300:14; (Soto Palmer); 840:18–21 (Portugal: Voting in Washington is “very
 19 easy for me”). Indeed, voting has become so easy in Washington because the Legislature has
 20 enacted multiple laws to increase voter participation,⁶ which counts in the State’s and Intervenor-
 21 Defendants’ favor. *See, e.g., McConchie v. Scholz*, 577 F. Supp. 3d 842, 862–63 (N.D. Ill. 2021)

22 ⁶ The examples are too voluminous to list compressively. *See, e.g.*, Wash. Laws of 2023, ch. 466 (automatically
 23 registering to vote any person who applies for, renews or updates an enhanced driver’s license or state ID card); Wash.
 24 Laws of 2023, ch. 363 (permitting online voter registration using only the last four digits of a registrant’s social security
 25 number); Wash. Laws of 2020, ch. 208 (permitting pre-registration by 16 and 17 year olds); Wash. Laws of 2019, ch.
 26 161 (requiring all ballot-return envelopes to include prepaid postage); Wash. Laws of 2019, ch. 6 (permitting voters
 27 to register using tribal ID cards and/or tribally-designated buildings as their address); Wash. Laws of 2018, ch. 112
 (permitting same-day voter registration); Wash. Laws of 2018, ch. 110 (authorizing automatic voter registration for
 clients of state agencies that provide services to persons with disabilities); Wash. Laws of 2011, ch. 10, § 35 (requiring
 counties to automatically issue a mail-in ballot to each registered voter every election); Wash. Laws of 2007, ch. 157,
 § 1 (permitting online voter registration for holders of a driver’s license or state ID card); Wash. Laws of 1993, ch. 6,
 § 3 (permitting any voter to vote by mail).

(three-judge court) (weighing against the plaintiffs that “[t]he General Assembly has enacted a string of laws designed to increase voting access over the past two decades, and those measures apply across the state.”); *see also Brnovich v. Democratic Nat'l Comm.*, 594 U.S. ___, 141 S. Ct. 2321, 2339 (2021) (explaining that, in Section 2 cases, “courts must consider the opportunities provided by a State’s entire system of voting” because Section 2 refers to the “collective concept of a State’s ‘political processes’ and its ‘political process’ as a whole”).

It is a mathematical tautology that Hispanics in LD-15 have the voting opportunity to turn out to vote as a cohesive bloc to elect any candidate they so choose.⁷

B. Plaintiffs have not shown each *Gingles* precondition was met.

The mistakes and insufficiencies of the evidence presented by Plaintiffs and their experts go to the hearts of the *Gingles* preconditions—compactness and racially polarized voting. Incomplete and inaccurate analysis by Dr. Collingwood yielded incorrect results. Dr. Alford’s expert report provided a more holistic analysis, noting the partisan polarization in the greater Yakima region (although he retreated from his report during trial). But the actual data from the only real-life election contested in LD-15 shows Dr. Owens’ report was the most correct.

1. *Gingles* Precondition 1 – Compactness of the Minority Community

The first *Gingles* precondition (“*Gingles I*”) requires the plaintiff to show that the “minority group” is “sufficiently large and [geographically] compact to constitute a majority in a reasonably configured district.” *Milligan*, slip op. at 15 (quoting *Wisconsin Legis. v. Wisc. Elections Comm'n*, 142 S. Ct. 1245, 1248 (2022) (per curiam) (alterations in original)). This matters because the diverse Hispanic population spread across the greater Yakima region is not compact in the manner required by *Gingles I*: “[T]he compactness inquiry considers ‘the compactness of the minority population, not . . . the compactness of the contested district.’” *Perry*, 548 U.S. at 402 (quoting *Bush v. Vera*, 517 U.S. 952, 997 (1996)). In addition, for the purposes of the compactness inquiry,

⁷ To the extent Plaintiffs insinuate that there was low turnout due to some kind of voter suppression, those issues should be challenged under the *Anderson-Burdick* doctrine, *see Anderson v. Celebrezze*, 460 U.S. 780 (1983); *Burdick v. Takushi*, 504 U.S. 428 (1992), not used here as an end-run around Section 2’s requirements for vote-dilution plaintiffs.

[A] State may not “assum[e] from a group of voters’ race that they think alike, share the same political interests, and will prefer the same candidates at the polls.” In the absence of this prohibited assumption, there is no basis to believe a district that combines two farflung segments of a racial group with disparate interests provides the opportunity that § 2 requires or that the first *Gingles* condition contemplates.

Id. at 433 (quoting *Miller v. Johnson*, 515 U.S. 900, 920 (1995) (internal citations omitted)).

Yet not one expert in this case looked at the compactness of the minority community, other than Dr. Owens. Dr. Collingwood never even examined if doing so were possible. Trial Tr. 110:9–14 (Collingwood). Dr. Alford admitted he only found the demonstrative district to be compact “in appearance” but “without [conducting any] sort of extensive analysis.” Trial Tr. 857:3–14. But he misapplied the *Gingles* I requirements by looking “to the compactness of the [demonstrative] district itself, as opposed to the compactness of the Latino community within it.” Trial Tr. 858:14–19. Dr. Barreto’s presentation, discussed *infra* Part IV.B, did not contain any analysis on the compactness of the Hispanic population in the greater Yakima region, on communities of interest, or of any traditional districting principles.

Only Dr. Owens correctly examined compactness with the proper legal definition in mind. Trial Tr. 518:1–521:15. Indeed, while there are substantial Hispanic communities in the cities of Yakima, Othello and Pasco, these cities form a rough triangle with fifty to eighty miles between each. As a result, the enacted LD-15 features odd-shaped protrusions reaching out like fingers to encircle the Hispanic enclaves in Yakima and Pasco on the exact opposite ends of the district. This is not compact in the manner *Gingles* I requires. Cf. *Perry*, 548 U.S. at 434–35 (concluding that communities 300 miles apart in a *congressional district*⁸ were not reasonably compact, emphasizing the distinction between the compactness of a district’s outer boundaries and the Section 2 compactness inquiry). The limited evidence of compactness offered by Plaintiffs is basic and conclusory. See Trial Ex. 4 (Dr. Estrada: identifying “a common language and cultural traditions such as Cinco de Mayo celebrations” as evidence of “shared interests among the Latino communities in the Yakima Valley and Pasco areas”); Trial Tr. 830:4–16 (Portugal: “Yakima and

⁸ For scale, under the Enacted Plan, Washington’s congressional districts contain a population of approximately 770,152 people; its legislative districts contain a population of approximately 157,200. Trial Tr. 736:10–17.

1 Pasco have similar interests” because “eventually they’re going to be close”). On the other hand,
 2 several witnesses testified to a few of the many differences between Yakima and Pasco, including
 3 their geographic distance, their separate community groups (like chambers of commerce and
 4 LULAC chapters), and their unique political issues (like Hanford). *See* Trial Tr. 470:2–4, 471:14–
 5 472:12 (Fain); 734:4–735:13 (Graves); 844:23–845:11 (Portugal).

6 Finally, the finding of compactness in *Montes*, 40 F. Supp. 3d 1377, undercuts a finding of
 7 compactness here instead of supporting it. There, the minority community in the *City* of Yakima
 8 was compact because the majority of Hispanic voters in the city were in a small radius, surrounded
 9 by natural barriers. *See id.* at 1393 (noting a “substantial majority of the City of Yakima’s Latino
 10 population lives in an area east of 16th avenue” comprising “one-third of the City’s entire
 11 geographic area (9.78 square miles out of 28 square miles total”). That is not the case here, where
 12 “the Hispanic populations [are] at the far edges of the district.” Trial Tr. 521:13–15 (Owens).

13 Plaintiffs have failed to establish that the compactness precondition of *Gingles* can be
 14 satisfied. Their experts either neglected to examine the question at all—or answered the wrong
 15 question—and they provided no reasoned analysis of what Latino voters in Yakima and Pasco, not
 16 to mention Othello and the small towns along the Yakima River like Granger and Mabton, have in
 17 common with each other besides race.

18 **2. *Gingles* Preconditions 2 and 3—Racially Polarized Voting**

19 The second and third *Gingles* preconditions involve racially polarized voting—essentially,
 20 the political cohesiveness of whites and Hispanics, which exists when a “minority group has
 21 expressed *clear* political preferences that are distinct from those of the majority.” *Gomez v.*
 22 *Watsonville*, 863 F.2d 1407, 1415 (9th Cir. 1988) (emphasis added). The second and third
 23 preconditions often run together because they concern the political cohesion among the relevant
 24 minority communities and the racially polarized voting (“RPV”) within those communities. *See*
 25 *LULAC v. Abbott*, 2022 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 224928, at *10–12 (W.D. Tex. Dec. 14, 2022) (three-
 26 judge district court). The ultimate question is whether a minority group votes cohesively, with
 27 white voters overwhelming the choices of minority voters. *See id.*

1 But Section 2 is “a balm for racial minorities, not political ones.” *Baird v. Consolidated*
 2 *City of Indianapolis*, 976 F.2d 357, 361 (7th Cir. 1992). This flows from the text of Section 2 itself:

3 No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting or standard, practice, or procedure
 4 shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision in a manner which
 5 results in a denial or abridgement of the right of any citizen of the United States to
 6 *vote on account of race or color.*

7 52 U.S.C. § 10301(a) (emphasis added). Failures of a minority group to elect representatives of its
 8 choice that are caused by partisanship, instead of race, provide no grounds for relief under the
 9 VRA:

10 Courts must undertake the additional inquiry into the reasons for, or causes of, these
 11 electoral losses in order to determine whether they were the product of “partisan
 12 politics” *or* “racial vote dilution,” “political defeat” *or* “built-in bias.” It is only
 13 upon concluding that a minority group’s failure to prevail at the polls, that is, their
 14 failure to attract the support of white voters, was the “result” or “function” of “racial
 15 vote dilution” or “built-in bias,” that a court may find that minority plaintiffs have
 16 suffered “a denial or abridgement of the right . . . to vote on account of race or
 17 color.”

18 *LULAC v. Clements*, 999 F.2d 831, 853–54 (5th Cir. 1993) (quoting *Whitcomb v. Chavis*, 403 U.S.
 19 124, 160 (1971)) (emphasis in original); *see also Baird*, 976 F.2d at 361 (the VRA “does not
 20 guarantee that nominees of the Democratic Party will be elected, even if [minority] voters are
 21 likely to favor that party’s candidates.”).

22 Assuming these preconditions do apply in some manner, courts typically find cohesion in
 23 a minority coalition when the various minority groups have electoral variances of less than ten
 24 percent. *See, e.g., Perry*, 548 U.S. at 427; *Clements*, 999 F.2d at 864-65. Because “[p]olitical
 25 cohesiveness must be proven with statistical evidence of historical voting patterns,” *Montes*, 40 F.
 26 Supp. 3d at 1401, resolution depends on the experts, their reports, and their trial testimony.

27 Here, the Court determined Dr. Owens, Dr. Alford and Dr. Collingwood were all experts
 28 for the purposes of the *Gingles* analyses. And when all elections are looked at—as both Drs. Owens
 29 and Alford did—it is clear that partisanship drove voting—as both Drs. Owens and Alford
 30 concluded. Dr. Owens’ analytical framework for predicting electoral polarization does not conflict
 31 with, but rather builds upon, the findings of Dr. Collingwood, who chose to look only at elections
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1 tending to show racially polarized voting and ignored elections that did not. The robustness of Dr.
 2 Owens' framework was demonstrated in the actual 2022 election in LD-15, which correctly
 3 predicted little-to-no polarization in a contest involving a Hispanic Republican.

4 a. *The State relies on an incorrect reading of the fractured Gingles
 opinions.*

5 The State told this Court that *Gingles* "makes clear" that "[i]t is the difference between the
 6 choices made by [minority voters] and whites—not the reasons for that difference—that results in
 7 [minority voters] having less opportunity than whites to elect their preferred representatives."
 8 (State of Washington's Trial Br., *Soto Palmer* Dkt. # 194 at 11). Indeed, the State cites *Gingles* at
 9 "478 U.S. at 63" to bolster this proposition. *Id.* But the State is wrong. That quote, and that portion
 10 of the *Gingles* opinions—despite the State's misattribution of it to the majority in *Gingles*—is
 11 actually Justice Brennan's plurality opinion, which is non-precedential and non-controlling. *See generally Gingles*, 478 U.S. 30 (Parts I, II, III-A, III-B IV-A, and V constituted the opinion of the
 12 court, but Part III.C was joined only by Justices Marshall, Blackmun, and Stevens); *see also Reed*
 13 *v. Town of Babylon*, 914 F. Supp. 843, 876 (E.D.N.Y. 1996) ("Justice Brennan's holding with
 14 respect to the third precondition, however, did not have the support of a majority of the Justices.");
 15 *Clements*, 999 F.2d at 856 ("Both Justice White and Justice O'Connor were united in their fidelity
 16 to [the] distinction between vote dilution and partisan politics and in their opposition to Justice
 17 Brennan's attempt to expunge this teaching from the bloc voting inquiry.").

18 Regardless, Intervenor-Defendants are not requesting an inquiry into the subjective or
 19 individualized "intent" of minority or white voters, but rather into whether the *aggregate cause* of
 20 voting differences is the political identity of the *candidates*. *See* Trial Tr. 861:7–21 (Alford: "We
 21 have no measure of the partisanship of voters. But there is a partisan signal, with a candidate.").
 22 Due to some positional flip-flopping, the State now disagrees on this particular point with its own
 23 expert, Dr. Alford, who identified "a general pattern of partisan, rather than ethnic, polarization."
 24 Trial Ex. 601, at 13. The nature of this polarization is meaningless according to the State, although
 25 the sole authority it cites for this proposition is not the precedential or controlling opinion of the
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 27

1 Supreme Court. Nonetheless, Dr. Alford found strong evidence of different voting patterns by
 2 Hispanic and non-Hispanic voters relative to the party affiliation of a candidate, regardless of
 3 whether the Democratic candidate has a Spanish surname or not. *Id.*

- 4 b. *Dr. Owens' analytical framework reveals voting polarization is due
 to partisanship, not race.*

5 While Dr. Collingwood found that Hispanic voters exhibited cohesiveness in most of the
 6 elections he examined, Trial Tr. 65:20–24, by analyzing *all* recent elections, rather than hand-
 7 selecting which races to study, *cf.* Trial Tr. 105:5–106:3 (Collingwood: confirming he chose which
 8 elections to include in his report), Dr. Owens' revealed a critical insight into the existence (or lack)
 9 of racially-polarized voting in LD-15. Dr. Owens' conclusion wasn't that racially-polarized voting
 10 *never* exists; rather, that it *only* exists under a very particular set of election circumstances—
 11 specifically, partisan races between a White Democrat and a White Republican. *See* Trial Tr.
 12 538:22–539:5. This is not inconsistent with the conclusions of Dr. Collingwood or Dr. Alford.

13 But Dr. Owens' key finding is that whenever there is an election where those
 14 conditions *don't* exist, racially-polarized voting patterns either reverse themselves or disappear
 15 entirely:

- 16 • In partisan races between two candidates from the same party (a phenomenon that can
 17 readily occur in Washington's "Top Two" primary system), Dr. Owens' analysis shows
 18 that the Hispanic vote is split evenly. Trial Tr. 539:7–14; *see also* Trial Ex. 1001, at 9 tbl.
 19 1; *but cf.* Trial Tr. 69:19–70:15 (Owens: noting that Dr. Collingwood's reports did not
 20 include the 2020 lieutenant governor race involving two candidates from the same party).
- 21 • When a partisan race involves a White Democrat and Hispanic Republican, Hispanic voters
 22 were much less supportive of the Democratic candidate. Trial Tr. 539:22–540:2; *see also*
 23 Trial Ex. 1001, at 9, tbl. 1; *accord* Trial Tr. 69:19–70:15 (Collingwood: reporting that
 24 racially polarized voting was not found in his analysis of an election of this type).
- 25 • For nonpartisan races, Dr. Owens reported that Hispanic voters were less cohesive. Trial
 26 Tr. 541:22–542:15; *accord* Trial Tr. 69:19–70:24 (Collingwood); 861:22–863:25 (Alford:
 27

1 reporting his findings that in nonpartisan elections, Hispanic voters are “slightly less
 2 cohesive” and white voters show “essentially no evidence of cohesion at all.”); *see*
 3 *generally* Trial Tr. 864:6–13 (Alford: explaining that nonpartisan elections are probative
 4 for polarized voting analysis because it shows whether minority or Anglo reaction to a
 5 minority-preferred candidate is “a function of the party of those candidates, versus the
 6 ethnicity of those candidates”).

7 When trying to distinguish between correlation and causation, this pattern points to partisanship
 8 as the driver of polarization, not race itself. *See* Trial Tr. 546:13–16 (Owens: “It most often is
 9 going to be the partisanship of the candidates” that is driving the Hispanic vote, not race.).

10 But even if this Court were to take all of Dr. Collingwood’s framing and election choices
 11 as correct, the Plaintiffs still cannot show the second and third *Gingles* preconditions are satisfied.
 12 In the ten partisan elections analyzed by Dr. Collingwood, he finds that the Hispanic-preferred
 13 candidate would be defeated by the White-preferred candidate “seven out of ten times.” Trial Tr.
 14 72:23–73:3; *see also* Trial Ex. 1, at 37. And two of those seven “are very close[,]” according to
 15 Dr. Alford’s analysis. Trial Ex. 601, at 16.⁹ Thus, Plaintiffs have only shown, at most, that the
 16 “preferred candidates” would be likely defeated in just half of the elections.¹⁰ That hardly rises to
 17 the level of “legally significant racially polarized voting” required by *Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 56, nor
 18 does the VRA require that a minority group’s candidate of choice always win. *See Bartlett v.*
 19 *Strickland*, 556 U.S. 1, 29 (2009) (“[T]he VRA was passed to guarantee minority voters a fair
 20 game, not a killing.” (citing *Johnson*, 512 U.S. at 1016–17)).

21
 22
 23
 24 ⁹ Those outcomes would easily fall within the margin of error, if Dr. Collingwood had included such a metric in his
 report.

25 ¹⁰ As Dr. Alford also observed, small changes in the quality of the candidate or the policy platform could swing those
 26 reconstructed elections. *See* Trial Ex. 601; *see also* Trial Tr. 37:7–10 (Lopez: agreeing with the Court that “the Latino
 27 community would split” in an election where the “key issue” was abortion); Trial Tr. 279:17–23 (Sims: denying that
 she thought “Republicans would necessarily win LD 15,” calling it “a true swing district” that “with enough
 organizing” could flip).

c. *The sole contested legislative election held in the new LD-15 offers the most probative value for this Court.*

Lastly, but most importantly, elections have already begun taking place within the new LD-15 boundary lines. An actual election, by its very nature, is more probative than ones reconstructed by any party’s expert. *See, e.g., Milligan*, slip op. at 28 n.8 (“[C]ourts should exercise caution before treating results produced by algorithms as all but dispositive of a §2 claim.”). In the only contested legislative election held in LD-15, Nikki Torres—a Latina Republican—received sixty-eight percent of the vote, winning by thirty-five points. *See Trial Ex. 1055.*

Both Drs. Collingwood and Owens supplemented their reports based on this election. *See* Trial Exs. 2, 1002a, 1002b. Although Dr. Collingwood concluded that Democrat Lindsey Keeling was Hispanic voters' candidate of choice, his estimated level of Hispanic support for Ms. Keeling varied between 60 and 68 percent. *See* Trial Ex. 2, at 4 fig. 1. Dr. Owens, on the other hand, found that the Hispanic voters "were split, and not cohesive," with the Democratic candidate receiving "an estimated 52 percent support" from Hispanic voters compared to 48 percent for Nikki Torres. Trial Tr. 548:22–549:14; *see also* Trial Ex. 1002b at 3 tbl. 1.

The differences in each estimate stems from the ecological inference method each expert used to produce the estimate, and how that methodology incorporates voter turnout into the statistical model. Dr. Collingwood’s approach involved taking the extra step of trying to predict turnout by using CVAP estimates to generate an intermediate estimate that sums up “each voter’s estimated probability¹¹ of being white, and Hispanic, then divide[s] by the total number of voters.” Trial Ex. 2, at 6; *see also* Trial Tr. 114:9–115:10. Dr. Owens, however, relied on actual “precinct election returns,” meaning turnout was already implicit in the model he used. Trial Tr. 561:17–562:12.

Dr. Owens has the stronger argument here, as the analytical framework he presented in his first report, *see* Trial Ex. 1001, at 18, most accurately predicted the outcome of this state senate election. In addition, Dr. Collingwood's critique of Dr. Owen's methodology—that Dr. Owens

¹¹ Despite his report indicating that his methodology relies on a “probability” to produce an “estimate,” Trial Ex. 2, at 3, Dr. Collingwood averred at trial that these numbers “don’t produce a confidence interval,” Trial Tr. 113:18–20.

1 used “Goodman’s Regression,” which “does not bound the model between 0-100, so it is possible
 2 to get non-sensical values like negative voting and 130%,” Trial Ex. 2, at 5—is inapplicable in this
 3 case, as Dr. Owen’s model produced estimates well within the 0–100 percent range.

4 Finally, if Hispanic voters were voting more cohesively than not, the Democratic candidate
 5 would have won. Even if Dr. Collingwood’s most extreme estimate of Hispanic voters’ support
 6 for Ms. Keesling (68 percent¹²) were accurate, that falls below Dr. Alford’s 75 percent “non-
 7 arbitrary dividing line between things that are more cohesive than not, and things that are less
 8 cohesive than not.” Trial Tr. 863:10–13. Any cohesion over 75 percent would imply an implausibly
 9 low turnout rate for Hispanic Democrats. The 2022 election results were no surprise—they fit
 10 perfectly within Dr. Owens’ analytical framework described in his report submitted a week before
 11 the election, which he built from looking at *all* relevant elections, not just those that fit his
 12 presuppositions. Simply put, the facts on the ground support Dr. Owens’ conclusions.

13 **C. All things considered, and the preconditions notwithstanding, Plaintiffs have**
 14 **not shown sufficient evidence that Hispanic voters in the Yakima region have**
less opportunity to participate in the political process.

15 Regardless of the *Gingles* preconditions, the entire purpose of a Section 2 analysis is to
 16 determine whether, under the “totality of the circumstances,” Hispanic voters in the greater
 17 Yakima region have less or equal opportunity to participate in the political process. *Earl Old*
 18 *Person*, 312 F.3d at 1041 (applying the seven factors identified in the Senate Judiciary Committee
 19 Majority Report accompanying the 1982 bill amending Section 2). This is no afterthought—
 20 although it might be the “unusual” case where a claim satisfying the three *Gingles* preconditions
 21 fails to establish a violation of Section 2 under the totality of the circumstances, it is by no means
 22 unheard of. *E.g.*, *Clark v. Calhoun Cty.*, 88 F.3d 1393, 1402 (5th Cir. 1996) (“[T]his is not that
 23 ‘unusual case’ in which the three *Gingles* preconditions are satisfied but the totality of
 24 circumstances fail to show a Section(s) 2 violation.”); *NAACP v. City of Niagara Falls*, 65 F.3d
 25

26 ¹² While the actual confidence intervals for Dr. Collingwood’s two estimates of Ms. Keeling’s estimates share of the
 27 Latino vote are not reported, *see also supra* notes 9 and 11, they do not appear to be overlapping in the graph presented.
See Ex. 2, at 4 fig. 1. This suggests at least one estimate presented may be statistically flawed.

1 1002, 1020 (2d Cir. 1995) (affirming district court’s judgment that, “while there was substantial
 2 evidence of racially polarized voting dating back to elections in 1969, many of the other Senate
 3 Report factors weighed against a finding that the at-large system ‘operates to minimize or cancel
 4 out [the minority group’s] ability to elect their preferred candidates’” (quoting *Gingles*, 478 U.S.
 5 at 48)). The totality of the circumstances inquiry is no “empty formalism” and can be “powerful
 6 indeed.” *Clark*, 88 F.3d at 1397. The Ninth Circuit has approved a district court’s finding of no
 7 Section 2 liability when the *Gingles* preconditions were nonetheless met. *See Earl Old Person*,
 8 312 F.3d at 1051.

9 Accordingly, this Court must look for the “crucial” proof of “causal connection between
 10 the challenged voting practice and a prohibited discriminatory result.” *Smith v. Salt River Project
 Agric. Improvement & Power Dist.*, 109 F.3d 586, 595 (9th Cir. 1997). Put otherwise, a Section 2
 11 challenge “based purely on a showing of some relevant statistical disparity between minorities and
 12 whites,” without any evidence that the challenged rule causes that disparity between races, will be
 13 rejected. *Gonzalez v. Arizona*, 677 F.3d 383, 405 (9th Cir. 2012) (en banc); *see also NAACP v.
 14 Fordice*, 252 F.3d 361, 367 (5th Cir. 2011) (“Absent an indication that these facts actually hamper
 15 the ability of minorities to participate, they are, however, insufficient to support a finding that
 16 minorities suffer from unequal access to Mississippi’s political process.”) (cleaned up); *Clements*,
 17 999 F.2d at 866 (“Texas’ long history of discrimination [is] insufficient to support the district
 18 court’s ‘finding’ that minorities do not enjoy equal access to the political process absent some
 19 indication that these effects of past discrimination actually hamper the ability of minorities to
 20 participate.”); *Carrollton Branch of NAACP v. Stallings*, 829 F.2d 1547, 1561 (11th Cir. 1987)
 21 (“[A] history of official discrimination did exist in Carroll County but . . . the plaintiffs failed to
 22 establish there was a lack of ability of blacks to participate in the political process.”).

23 As to the factors themselves, the list truly is “non-exhaustive.” *Id.* Courts accordingly
 24 examine seriously all pertinent information. *See, e.g., McConchie*, 577 F. Supp. 3d at 862–63
 25 (carefully considering state ballot access and increased voting access). Recent progress, like
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1 modern legislative efforts to remedy past harms to a minority group and empower their footholds
 2 in the political community, *see supra* note 6, should count towards political opportunity.

3 In the end, this Court must make its own intensely local appraisal of the factual record with
 4 respect to voting in Washington state and the greater Yakima region. Unfortunately, Plaintiffs'
 5 expert Dr. Estrada presented little evidence to aid the Court in this analysis, performing no local
 6 analysis of his own, instead relying on work done by others. *Compare, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 135:8–9
 7 (“[I]n my research that I conducted, I found that Latino ballots are rejected in places like Yakima
 8 County.”) with 151:14–152:5 (admitting he “looked at” an article but did not “personally conduct
 9 independent analysis of ballot signature rejection rates”).

10 Were this Court to reach the totality of the circumstances analysis, it should hold that
 11 Plaintiffs have not carried their burden to show that, all else considered, Hispanic voters are not
 12 able to participate equally in the political processes in the greater Yakima region.

13 1. Proportionality

14 Proportionality, which the VRA does not require and the existence of which does not itself
 15 automatically doom a Section 2 claim, is preliminary in nature. *See, e.g., Perry*, 548 U.S. at 436;
 16 *Bartlett*, 556 U.S. at 30. Nonetheless, it remains obviously probative because “no violation of § 2
 17 can be found . . . where, in spite of continuing discrimination and racial bloc voting, minority
 18 voters form effective voting majorities in a number of districts roughly proportional to the minority
 19 voters’ respective shares in the voting-age population.” *Johnson*, 512 U.S. at 1000. This inquiry
 20 looks at the percentage of total districts that are Hispanic “opportunity districts” compared with
 21 the Hispanic share of the citizen voting-age population. *See Perry*, 548 U.S. at 436. Thirty-one of
 22 Washington’s forty-nine legislative districts are represented by at least one legislator with the same
 23 partisan preference as the candidates that Plaintiffs identify as “Latino preferred,” meaning 63
 24 percent of Washington legislative districts fit the strict definition of opportunity district, *see*
 25 *Bartlett*, 556 U.S. at 13, far exceeding Washington’s Hispanic CVAP proportion of 8.1 percent,
 26 *see* United States Census Bureau, *Citizen Voting Age Population by Race and Ethnicity*,
 27 <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/voting-rights/cvap.html> (last

1 visited July 12, 2023). Moreover, there are at least 14 members of the Legislature who identify as
 2 Hispanic or Latino, Trial Tr. 196:23-197:11, representing 9.5 percent of all legislators, also
 3 surpassing the state Hispanic CVAP percentage. So, statewide, proportionality exists already and
 4 in no way requires the creation of another Democratic-majority district.

5 **2. History of Official Discrimination (Senate Factor 1)**

6 Plaintiffs failed to show that a history of official discrimination “resulted in Latinos having
 7 less opportunity to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice.”
 8 *Gonzalez*, 677 F.3d at 407; *see also Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 36–37; *Fordice*, 252 F.3d at 367;
 9 *Clements*, 999 F.2d at 866; *Stallings*, 829 F.2d at 1561. To be sure, Plaintiffs, through Dr. Estrada,
 10 pointed to a litany of past miscarriages of justice earlier in Washington’s imperfect history. But
 11 they never showed how those harms, many of which are decades old, work to deny Hispanics equal
 12 opportunity to participate in the political process today. Indeed, Plaintiffs and Dr. Estrada ignored
 13 the many steps taken by the State to ameliorate those sins. *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 158:24–160:2
 14 (Estrada: “not sure” that the Washington State Legislature’s near-unanimous approval of funding
 15 research about restrictive covenants would apply to Senate Factor 8); 161:9–162 (Estrada: “not
 16 aware” that the Legislature appropriated \$3.5 million to KDNA Spanish-language radio—which
 17 “provide[s] critical services to the Latino community”—the last five years, and that GOP
 18 legislators from Legislative Districts 14 and 15 were responsible for these earmarks in the state
 19 operating budget).

20 In this century, Plaintiffs pointed only to the *Montes*, 40 F. Supp. 3d 1377, decision and a
 21 2004 consent agreement between Yakima County and the Department of Justice. But the *Montes*
 22 case has limited applicability to this analysis, *see infra* at p. 42, and the near twenty-year-old
 23 consent decree was by its nature an agreement by Yakima County to improve Latino registration
 24 and voting, which it has. *See generally* Trial Tr. 38:3–11, 299:17–300:15, 839:6–840:20 (Lopez,
 25 Soto Palmer and Portugal testifying to the ease of registering to vote and casting a ballot). If
 26 anything, those changes, combined with the many recent strides by the State to encourage minority
 27 political participation, *see, e.g.*, Washington Voting Rights Act of 2018, Wash. Laws of 2018, ch.

1 113; *supra* note 6, show just how much official forms of discrimination have been eradicated.
 2 Indeed, other courts have found such progress can help atone for historic injustices. *See, e.g., Butts*
 3 *v. City of New York*, 779 F.2d 141, 150 (2d Cir. 1985) (“[M]itigating factors [like steps to
 4 encourage minority voting, mail registration, and a registration task force] further diminish the
 5 force of this showing [of past discrimination].”); *Aldasoro v. Kennerson*, 922 F. Supp. 339, 363–
 6 64 (S.D. Cal. 1995) (“[N]umerous laws enacted by the California Legislature in the last 30 years
 7 to improve minority voting participation and to liberalize the political process create an election
 8 environment free of discrimination touching the right to vote.”) (cleaned up); *Romero v. City of*
 9 *Pomona*, 665 F. Supp. 853, 861 (C.D. Cal. 1987) (“[E]vidence regarding any history of past
 10 discrimination in California and in the City of Pomona touching upon the right of minorities to . . .
 11 participate in the political process have been mitigated by intensive efforts of the California
 12 Legislature to improve minority participation and to liberalize the political process.”).

13 At trial, Plaintiffs never came close to showing a causal nexus between their examples of
 14 past discrimination and Hispanic political participation today.

15 **3. Discrimination-Enhancing Electoral Practices and Candidate Slating
 16 Processes (Senate Factors 3 and 4)**

17 No evidence suggests that Washington or the political subdivisions in the greater Yakima
 18 region use voting practices or procedures to discriminate against Hispanic voters. *See Gingles*, 478
 19 U.S. at 37. On the contrary, the evidence was overwhelming that, for Hispanic voters, voting is
 20 smooth and easy throughout the State and in the Yakima Valley. *See Trial Tr. 38:3–11, 299:17–*
 21 300:15, 839:6–840:20 (Lopez, Soto Palmer and Portugal testifying to the ease of registering to
 22 vote and casting a ballot); *see also supra* note 6 (recently-enacted voting legislation cited).

23 Finally, and relatedly, Plaintiffs presented no evidence regarding candidate slating process
 24 (Senate Factor 4), which Washington does not utilize.

25 **4. Socioeconomic Disparities (Senate Factor 5)**

26 Plaintiffs’ expert Dr. Estrada presented charts of socioeconomic disparities between
 27 Hispanics and whites but failed to show how any such disparities “hinder [Hispanics’] ability to

1 participate effectively in the political process.” *See Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 37. Again, a causal nexus
 2 is required, *see id.*; *Gonzalez*, 677 F.3d at 407; *Fordice*, 252 F.3d at 367; *Clements*, 999 F.2d at
 3 866; *Stallings*, 829 F.2d at 1561, and again Plaintiffs failed to establish one. For example, the
 4 parties do not dispute that education disparities exist in the greater Yakima region. *See Trial Ex.*
 5 4, at 51. But no expert testimony “connect[ed] the dots” as to how those problems negatively affect
 6 Yakima Hispanics’ ability to participate in the political process and elect their candidates of choice.
 7 *McConchie*, 577 F. Supp. 3d at 863; *see also Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 36–37; *Gonzalez*, 677 F.3d at
 8 407; *Fordice*, 252 F.3d at 367; *Clements*, 999 F.2d at 866; *Stallings*, 829 F.2d at 1561.

9 **5. Racial Appeals from Campaigns (Senate Factor 6)**

10 Political campaigns in the greater Yakima region have not “been characterized by overt or
 11 subtle racial appeals.” *Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 37. None of the isolated but lamentable experiences
 12 Plaintiffs presented involved *political campaigns* using overt racial appeals to solicit votes, but
 13 rather were racially-charged comments made by members of the general public. *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr.
 14 293:24–25 (Soto Palmer: relaying out-of-court statement by voter that “I’m not voting for
 15 [Hispanic candidate Munoz], I’m racist.”). Those vignettes, however distressing, are not legally
 16 relevant. At no point did Plaintiffs adduce any firsthand testimony supporting this factor. For
 17 example, Ms. Soto Palmer could not testify to hearing any racial appeals from candidates. *See Trial*
 18 Tr. 301:6–7. The sole example connected to an actual campaign was one candidate’s Facebook
 19 post opposing illegal immigration. *See Trial Tr. 143:5–17 (Estrada)*. Illegal immigration has been
 20 a hotly-debated political topic for decades, and a political candidate’s opinions on the issue is
 21 hardly a “racial appeal” of the type contemplated by Senate Factor 6.

22 To find this factor in favor of the Plaintiffs would be to adopt their kook-empowering
 23 approach. *See Trial Tr. 164:24–165:1* (The Court: “if some kook yells something at a candidate,
 24 just a voter or citizen, that’s not the same as an elected official or another candidate?”). Elevating
 25 those types of remarks is not the purpose of this factor.

1 **6. Minority Electoral Success in the Jurisdiction (Senate Factor 7)**

2 This factor looks at “the extent to which members of the minority group have been elected
 3 to public office *in the jurisdiction.*” *Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 37 (emphasis added). Dr. Estrada
 4 misunderstood this, looking only specifically at legislative races in the historic 15th Legislative
 5 District (but still not the only contested election to take place in the newly-enacted LD-15). Trial
 6 Tr. 167:21–168:18. But all races “in the jurisdiction” are probative. And in this case, since
 7 Plaintiffs rely on populations spread throughout the greater Yakima region to support their *Gingles*
 8 I contention, it follows that this is the “jurisdiction” in which the success of minority candidates
 9 should be judged. Yet Plaintiffs not only ignored Hispanic electoral success in this region; they
 10 downplayed and dismissed it at trial.

11 For example, Representative Mary Skinner, from Legislative District 14,¹³ was “born in
 12 California to migrant-worker parents and raised in the Yakima Valley” and became “[t]he first
 13 Latino legislator from the Yakima Valley.” Trial Ex. 1066. She was first elected in 1994 and served
 14 seven terms until retiring in 2009. *See id.*; Trial Ex. 1061, at 51. Legislative District 13 is currently
 15 represented in the State House by Intervenor Alex Ybarra, who is Latino. Under the Commission’s
 16 enacted redistricting plan, he represents 30,700 individuals in Yakima County, 8,293 of whom
 17 identify as Hispanic or Latino. Wash. State Redistricting Comm’n, *2022 Washington State Map*
 18 *Book*, at 55–56, available at <https://www.redistricting.wa.gov/district-maps-handouts>. Moreover,
 19 numerous cities in Yakima County have Hispanic mayors and city councilmembers. *See, e.g.*, Trial
 20 Tr. 166:4–15; (Pls’ Reply in Supp. of Mot. for Prelim. Inj., *Soto Palmer* Dkt. # 54 at 10 n.7).

21 Dr. Estrada’s report lists a handful of Latino candidates who were not elected but fails to
 22 examine whether factors other than the candidates’ race might explain why they were
 23 unsuccessful. *See* Trial Ex. 4, at 69–70. For example, Ms. Soto Palmer’s loss in her 2016 campaign
 24 for State Representative in Legislative District 14—which is cited as an example in Dr. Estrada’s
 25 report, *id.* at 69—may more reasonably be attributed to her campaign’s lack of infrastructure,

26 ¹³ Legislative District 14, as it existed from 1994 through 2008 when Rep. Skinner was running for and serving as
 27 State Representative, included much of the City of Yakima and Yakima County, and overlapped with the newly-enacted LD-15. *See, e.g.*, Trial Ex. 1061, at 186, 188.

1 rather than her ethnicity, *see* Trial Tr. 301:14–302:24 (Soto Palmer: failing to recall much of a
 2 campaign strategy in terms of advertisements, knocking doors, and fundraising).

3 And Dr. Estrada, even while looking at legislative races, refused to concede at trial that
 4 Sen. Torres’s 2022 victory was probative at all. Trial Tr. 168:11–18. This was typical of his pattern
 5 of ignoring or downplaying outcomes that did not fit Plaintiffs’ narrative that Latino candidates
 6 never win. *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 165:21–166:3 (disregarding city races because they have large Latino
 7 majorities); 166:16–167:1 (demonstrating a lack of awareness of the Latino composition of the
 8 mayors and city councils of multiple key cities in the jurisdiction, despite being retained to provide
 9 an expert opinion on this factor).

10 To the extent that Plaintiffs and their witnesses begrudgingly acknowledged that a Latina
 11 was elected to the State Senate in the first and only contested election in the newly-enacted LD-
 12 15, they seemingly attempted to discredit and discount her as a Hispanic elected official because
 13 of their policy disagreements with her. *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 846:9–848:16 (Portugal: Sen. Torres
 14 does not represent the interests of the Latino community in LD-15 because she was elected as a
 15 Republican). The ethnic insinuation here is repugnant and, thankfully, has no basis in our federal
 16 law.¹⁴ No court, for obvious reasons, has created such an exception to the minority success Senate
 17 factor. Nor does this factor refer to “preferred candidates” of the minority group, which is the
 18 standard is for the *Gingles* preconditions, not Senate Factor 7. *Cf. Perry*, 548 U.S. at 425.

19 Despite Plaintiffs’ attempt to argue otherwise, Hispanic candidates have been elected to
 20 both legislative and local offices in the jurisdiction in question. The new LD-15 State Senator is
 21 Latina and there are numerous Hispanic mayors and city councilmembers throughout LD-15.

22 **7. Significant Lack of Responsiveness by Elected Officials**

23 Plaintiffs did not show a “significant lack of responsiveness on the part of elected officials,”
 24 another factor with “probative value.” *See Gingles*, 478 U.S. at 37. Rather than showing serious
 25

26 ¹⁴ The difficulty for various Plaintiffs’ witnesses in describing exactly who counts as “Hispanic” is no surprise,
 27 considering that, as the Supreme Court recently noted, the racial category “Hispanic” is “arbitrary or undefined,” and
 cultural norms continue evolving. *See Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. Harvard*, 600 U. S. ___, slip op. at 25
 (2023) (citing M. Lopez, J. Krogstad, & J. Passel, Pew Research Center, *Who is Hispanic?* (Sept. 15, 2022)).

1 problems, Plaintiffs did not present any evidence supporting this factor beyond basic ideological
 2 disagreements over policy, *see, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 290:8–16 (Soto Palmer: disagreeing with Sen. King
 3 on the Washington State Voting Rights Act, which ultimately passed); Ex. 4, at 71–77 (concluding
 4 that elected officials in the Yakima region are “not responding to the concerns of the Latino
 5 community” based exclusively on the voting scorecard of a single self-organized, self-selected
 6 advocacy group), or vague and conclusory testimony, *see, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 291:22–23 (Soto Palmer:
 7 “I do not feel that they were responsive to our needs and our fear for safety”).¹⁵

8 Belying Plaintiffs’ non-responsiveness arguments—and the assertion by one witness that
 9 when elected officials *were* being responsive, it was only part of a “show[,]” exemplary of “elected
 10 officials [who] say one thing, then do another.” Trial Tr. 826:6–20 (Portugal)—is a robust record
 11 of responsiveness by the Republican legislators representing the Yakima region. In fact, Yakima-
 12 area legislators have demonstrated particular responsiveness with respect to many of the very
 13 policies that Plaintiffs own witnesses highlighted as uniquely important to the needs of the Latino
 14 community in the Yakima Valley:

- 15 • Dr. Estrada testified how research by the University of Washington and Eastern
 Washington University found the use of “racially restrictive covenants” to be an example
 of the “history of segregation of Central Washington.” Trial Tr. 127:13–128:9. In 2021,
 the Legislature, by a nearly unanimous vote, passed a bill requiring the University of
 Washington and Eastern Washington University to review property deeds for racially-
 restrictive covenants and creating a process for property owners to remove such unlawful
 covenants from their own property records. *See Wash. Laws of 2021, ch. 256.*

22
 23 ¹⁵ Ms. Soto Palmer claimed she did not know anyone who voted for Sen. Torres, Trial Tr. 305:19–22, an improbability
 24 given that approximately half of Hispanic voters in LD-15 cast their ballots for Sen. Torres, *see* Trial Ex. 1002b, at 3
 25 tbl. 1. Someone who does not know a single member of a massive portion of the Hispanic population has limited
 26 probative testimony as to that population’s needs. Likewise, little probative help comes from witnesses like Sen.
 27 Rebecca Saldaña, who (1) doesn’t represent the Yakima area, *cf.* Trial Tr. 170:21–25; (2) has never lived in the Yakima
 Valley region, Trial Tr. 201:5–7; (3) testified mostly hearsay about what other people think about Sen. Torres and a
 former state senator, *e.g.*, Trial Tr. 173:2–3 (“neighbors and folks feeling very worried”); and (4) made tenuous points
 about “responsiveness” that she (and by implication, not Sen. Torres) was the only elected official who actually cared
 about Hispanics in the Yakima Valley, Trial Tr. 201:14–17. Nothing was gained by her personal views towards
 Republican elected officials nor through the hypothetical hearsay of the voters she said made statements to her.

- 1 • Dr. Estrada also testified how community institutions like KDNA, a Spanish-language
 2 radio station out of Granger, were formed in response to racial discrimination and
 3 inequality. Trial Tr. 129:6–12. During its past five sessions, the Legislature has
 4 appropriated over \$4 million to KDNA from the state operating budget—earmarks that
 5 were requested by legislators from Legislative Districts 14 and 15. *See Wash. Laws of*
 6 *2023, ch. 475, § 129(50)(a)* (appropriating \$750,000 to KDNA in the 2023–25 biennial
 7 budget); *Wash. Laws of 2022, ch. 297, § 128(191)* (appropriating \$500,000 to KDNA in
 8 the 2023 supplemental budget for a Spanish-language radio campaign aimed at reducing
 9 gang violence in Yakima County); *Wash. Laws of 2021, ch. 334, § 222(44)–(46)*
 10 (appropriating \$2 million to KDNA in the 2021–23 biennial budget for “Spanish language
 11 public radio media campaign[s]” aimed at providing COVID-19 education and “preventing
 12 opioid use disorders”); *Wash. Laws of 2019, ch. 415, § 221(8)* (appropriating \$800,000 to
 13 KDNA in the 2019–21 biennial budget for a Spanish-language radio campaign “aimed at
 14 preventing opioid use disorders”).
- 15 • Ms. Soto Palmer testified that she “volunteered with the Yakima County Dream team,” a
 16 group that was “pushing for the Dream Act in the State of Washington.” Trial Tr. 288:24–
 17 289:2. But even she was not “surprise[d]” to learn that all three legislators who were then
 18 representing her in Legislative District 14 had voted in favor of the Dream Act, and
 19 acknowledged that their support “could be” considered “evidence . . . of listening to folks
 20 in [the] community, and taking various viewpoints into account”. Trial Tr. 304:2–15; *see*
 21 *generally* The REAL Hope Act, *Wash. Laws of 2014, ch. 1* (making undocumented
 22 students eligible for state college financial aid programs).

* * *

24 As explained previously, *Milligan*, 599 U.S. ___, has little to add in these cases.
 25 Washington is not Alabama, and Yakima is not Mobile. But the inapplicability is so stark that it
 26 merits accentuation. In *Milligan*, the Supreme Court affirmed the district court’s factual findings
 27 under the totality-of-the-circumstances prong:

[T]he District Court concluded that plaintiffs had carried their burden at the totality of circumstances stage. The Court observed that elections in Alabama were racially polarized; that “Black Alabamians enjoy virtually zero success in statewide elections”; that political campaigns in Alabama had been “characterized by overt or subtle racial appeals”; and that “Alabama’s extensive history of repugnant racial and voting-related discrimination is undeniable and well documented.

599 U.S. ___, slip op. at 14 (quoting district court decision below).

The elements noted by the district court in that case fail here. Hispanic candidates enjoy electoral success in statewide and Yakima elections; political campaigns in Washington and Yakima are not characterized by racial appeals; and Washington’s incidents of voting-related discrimination have been thankfully relegated to the trash heap of history. To the extent this Court looks to *Milligan* to assist its decision-making here, it should examine seriously the differences between the totality of circumstances factors in that case and those in this one.

III. Plaintiffs’ intentional vote dilution claim is dead.

Plaintiffs’ contention that the Commissioners intentionally diluted Hispanic votes in the greater Yakima region has been unsubstantiated throughout discovery, but trial underscored the absurdity of the claim. It is a difficult claim to make. *See Brnovich*, 141 S. Ct. at 2349–50 (district courts analyzing discriminatory purpose under Section 2 should look for evidence that the lawmaking body “as a whole was imbued with racial motives.”). It is the intent of the Commissioners that matters, *see* discussion *infra* Part IV.A.1, and Plaintiffs gave no evidence of intent by the Commissioners to dilute Hispanic vote in the Yakima region. Evidence at trial gave shape to what really happened—all four Commissioners negotiated in good faith to make a politically-competitive statewide map that included a majority-minority district in the Yakima Valley. *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 252:24–253:9, 282:13–18 (Sims); 326:22-24 (Walkinshaw); 474:10–13 (Fain); 745:7–12 (Graves). This was not a “façade,” it was reality.

And although the racial sorting was not ultimately justified, *see infra* Part IV, not a single person working on the draft maps intended to dilute Hispanic voting power. On the contrary—at trial, all four Commissioners averred, some with great passion, that they had no such intent, and three specified that they were happy to try to empower and be responsive to Hispanic voters, not

1 harm them. *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 285:9–12 (Sims); 346:6-12 (Walkinshaw); 507:17–508:1 (Fain);
 2 771:9–22 (Graves: “It’s not only wrong, it’s pretty insulting. I told you my story earlier, of my
 3 experience talking with people about Hispanics in the Yakima Valley. It’s one of the reasons why
 4 I was not dragged kicking and screaming to turn the 15th into a district that was majority Hispanic.
 5 I thought it would be a really useful thing for Hispanic voters there, to be able to choose somebody
 6 who they wanted as their representative. And the fact that in the very first election we’ve had under
 7 that map, the Hispanic candidate received two-thirds of the vote, made me pretty proud, and stood
 8 to me as pretty strong evidence that not only did we not intend – I certainly did not intend to
 9 discriminate against Hispanics, but this district could actually be a really helpful, useful one for
 10 Hispanics in the Yakima Valley.”). Either all four Commissioners perjured themselves, or this
 11 unserious claim is dead. *See also Milligan*, slip op. at 3 (Kavanaugh, J., concurring) (“[A]s this
 12 Court has long recognized—and as all Members of this Court today agree—the text of §2
 13 establishes an effects test, not an intent test.”) (internal cross-references omitted).

14 IV. LD-15 was an unjustified and unconstitutional racial gerrymander.

15 Good faith attempts at VRA compliance “cannot justify race-based districting where the
 16 challenged district was not reasonably necessary under a constitutional reading and application”
 17 of federal law. *Covington v. North Carolina*, 316 F.R.D. 117, 166 (M.D.N.C. 2016) (three-judge
 18 court), *summarily aff’d*, 581 U.S. 1015 (2017) (quoting *Miller*, 515 U.S. at 921). The trial revealed
 19 that the Commission—the only body whose intent is relevant in Washington—districted LD-15
 20 primarily on the basis of Hispanic ethnicity and were not justified in doing so.

21 A. **Race predominated because the voting Commissioners, who exclusively 22 carried out the substance of statewide redistricting, made Hispanic citizen 23 voting age population the criterion that could not be compromised.**

24 Laws—including redistricting laws—sorting citizens because of their race or ethnicity are
 25 constitutionally suspect and deserve strict scrutiny. *See, e.g.*, *Hunt v. Cromartie*, 526 U.S. 541, 546
 26 (1999) (citing *Shaw v. Hunt*, 517 U.S. 899, 904 (1996)). Plaintiff Garcia brings a *Shaw* claim, for
 27 which he must show race was the “predominant factor” motivating the primary line-drawers’
 decision to place a significant number of voters within a specific district. *Cooper*, 581 U.S. at 291.

1 He has done so. It is the Commissioners' intent that controls, and the Hispanic 50-percent-plus-
 2 one CVAP was their uncompromisable criterion in negotiating and adopting LD-15.

3 **1. Only the Commissioners' intent is relevant.**

4 Precedent to analyzing predominance is the straightforward question of which map-
 5 drawers should have their intent scrutinized—the Commissioners who exclusively carried out the
 6 substance of redistricting or the Legislature that made a small number of technical amendments to
 7 that map? This Court has already surmised that it is “right” that “the Commission’s intent is the
 8 one that should be determinative in legal challenges” to the maps. Trial Tr. 195:21–196:3. This is
 9 based on sound reasoning in light of Washington’s redistricting procedures and Supreme Court
 10 precedent. The Commissioners—assisted by their respective primary staffers—substantially
 11 carried out redistricting for the State of Washington, and only their intent is relevant here.

12 In Washington, the Legislature has delegated its redistricting powers to the Commission
 13 through a voter-approved state constitutional amendment. *See WASH. CONST. art. II, § 43*, as
 14 amended by WASH. CONST. amend. 74, S.J. Res. 103, 48th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 1983) (enacted,
 15 approved by voters Nov. 8, 1983); *see generally* T. Thomas Singer, *Reappraising
 16 Reapportionment*, 22 GONZ. L. REV. 527 (1986-87). Under state law, “[l]egislative and
 17 congressional districts may not be changed or established except pursuant to” article II, section 43
 18 of the state constitution. WASH. CONST. art. II, § 43(11) (emphasis added). As the Court
 19 summarized during trial, the Legislature then has “[l]imited authority” to amend with “[t]echnical
 20 things.” Trial Tr. 202:21; 203:8.¹⁶ In 2022, the Legislature only amended LD-15 by adding seven
 21 census blocks and removing two, with no net population change to the Commission-approved map.

22

23 ¹⁶ *See also* RCW 44.05.100(2)-(3) (“(2) After submission of the plan by the commission, the legislature shall have the
 24 next thirty days during any regular or special session to amend the commission’s plan. If the legislature amends the
 25 commission’s plan the legislature’s amendment must be approved by an affirmative vote in each house of two-thirds
 26 of the members elected or appointed thereto, and may not include more than two percent of the population of any
 27 legislative or congressional district. (3) The plan approved by the commission, with any amendment approved by the
 legislature, shall be final upon approval of such amendment or after expiration of the time provided for legislative
 amendment by subsection (2) of this section whichever occurs first, and shall constitute the districting law applicable
 to this state for legislative and congressional elections, beginning with the next elections held in the year ending in
 two.” (emphasis added)).

1 See H. Con. Res. 4407, 67th Leg., Reg. Sess., at 2:35-36, 71:9–77:26 (Wash. 2022); *see also*
 2 discussion *supra* pp. 4–5.

3 This process is analogous to the facts in *Covington*, 316 F.R.D. at 125–29. In that case, the
 4 North Carolina House and Senate districts were created primarily by two Chairs, assisted by a
 5 map-drawing expert. *Id.* at 126–28. The drawn maps, however, became law only once passed by
 6 the full House and Senate—both making “modest revisions.” *Id.* at 127. The three-judge court,
 7 analyzing predominance and race-sorting intent, did not consider any argument that the full
 8 Legislature’s passing the plan somehow purged the map of any racial taint.

9 In other words, there can be no “map laundering,” where the Commission’s
 10 unconstitutional race-predominating map is washed clean through the Legislature’s limited
 11 amendatory process. *See id.* at 128 (“[B]ecause those maps were the work of [the map-drawer],
 12 who was in turn directed only by the two Redistricting Chairs, it is clear that three individuals
 13 substantially carried out North Carolina’s 2011 statewide redistricting.”).

14 Under this sensible standard, the racial gerrymandering predominance inquiry asks who
 15 “substantially carried out” the challenged redistricting. It is their intent that must be examined; if
 16 their work is merely adopted by the Legislature with minor changes, which is exactly what
 17 happened here, those legislative adjustments are disregarded in the racial gerrymandering
 18 predominance inquiry. The *Covington* court’s approach also avoids the egregious and absurd
 19 possibility that one body (like a legislature) could immunize the truly racist Fourteenth
 20 Amendment violations of another body (like an independent commission or legislative committee)
 21 by simply rubber-stamping the violative redistricting plan with a few minor technical, non-
 22 substantive changes. Were the Legislature’s intent relevant, such a racist map could pass
 23 constitutional muster, an outcome that cannot be right.

24 In *Covington*, the Supreme Court “affirmed the District Court’s ruling on the merits of the
 25 plaintiffs’ racial-gerrymandering claims,” *North Carolina v. Covington*, 581 U.S. 486, 487 n.*
 26 (2017), giving the District Court’s decision in *Covington* the weight of Supreme Court precedent
 27 with respect to racial gerrymandering analysis. *See Ill. State Bd. of Elections v. Socialist Workers*

Party, 440 U.S. 173, 182 (1979) (“[T]he precedential effect of a summary affirmance” by the Supreme Court extends to ““the precise issues presented.””) (quoting *Mandel v. Bradley*, 432 U.S. 173, 176 (1977)).

Throughout the *Garcia* trial, the Commissioners and their staff testified that maps were substantially crafted by the four Commissioners, assisted by respective staffers. *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 351:16-352:11 (Grose); 779:5-780:3 (O’Neil: “[I] assisted in the drawing and proposing of maps and researching those maps, and the data along with those maps.”). In particular, Commissioners Sims and Graves performed the brunt of the negotiation and drawing of the legislative map, including LD-15, with assistance in the actual generation of the maps by their staffers Osta Davis and Anton Grose. *See* Trial Tr. 394:16-395:5 (Grose); Dep. Designation of Osta Davis, *Soto Palmer* Dkt. # 205-2 at 74:3-8, 80:15-19, 82:1-14. Their testimonies, then, are not only the most probative but also the most legally relevant for the predominance inquiry. And conversely, the Legislature’s amendments to the Commission’s final legislative map through HCR 4407 were technical, perfunctory and non-substantive. *See* discussion *supra* pp. 4-5. Therefore, under the *Covington* district court’s Supreme-Court-affirmed “substantially carried out” test, this Court’s predominance analysis should look at the intent of the Commissioners—particularly Commissioners Sims and Graves—not the Legislature.

2. The fifty-percent-plus-one HCVAP was the uncompromisable criterion for all four voting Commissioners.

Democratic and Republican Commissioners alike testified that they recognized the gravity, difficulty, and importance of their task at hand, and engaged in good faith in the constitutionally-required bipartisan process to come to a reasonable compromise. *See Covington*, 316 F.R.D. at 129 (Racial predominance by no means signifies “that the legislature acted in bad faith or with discriminatory intent in its redistricting.”). Unfortunately, that reasoned compromise gave primacy to one factor in particular—race. And ultimately, the motive for racial sorting is irrelevant; the “inquiry is satisfied” if the Commission “place[d] a significant number of voters within or without

1 a district predominantly because of their race, regardless of their ultimate objective in taking that
 2 step.” *Cooper*, 581 U.S. at 308 n.7.

3 Racial predominance exists when race was the criterion for the government that “could not
 4 be compromised.” *Bethune-Hill v. Va. State Bd. of Elections*, 580 U.S. 178, 189 (2017) (quoting
 5 *Shaw*, 517 U.S. at 907) (alteration in original). If the Commissioners “use[d] race as their
 6 predominant districting criterion with the end goal of advancing their partisan interests” by
 7 capitalizing on a more “sellable” VRA compliant district, that “still triggers strict scrutiny.” See
 8 *Cooper*, 581 U.S. at 308 n.7.

9 Here, again, *Covington* is instructive, laying out various probative examples of
 10 predominance that existed in the North Carolina maps as they exist here: Drafts denoting certain
 11 house districts as “VRA districts,” 316 F.R.D. at 127; Chairs instructing the map-drawer to draw
 12 all VRA districts to reach a “50%-plus-one” minority VAP threshold, *id.* at 130; drawing the VRA
 13 district before the other districts, *id.* at 131; describing race-based criteria as “primary,” and
 14 uncompromisable, *id.* at 134–35; and using a policy of prioritizing “mechanical racial targets . . .
 15 above all other districting criteria (save one-person, one-vote),” *id.* at 135 (quoting *Ala. Legis.*
 16 *Black Caucus v. Alabama*, 575 U.S. 254, 267 (2015)).

17 The Commissioners’ final map made a Hispanic majority CVAP in LD-15 a *sine qua non*
 18 requirement for their respective votes in favor of the maps. In other words, but for a majority
 19 Hispanic CVAP in the district, the map would not have passed. The Democratic Commissioners
 20 wanted the ethnic threshold for its own merit; the Republican Commissioners wanted the ethnic
 21 threshold to win the Democratic Commissioners’ votes. All four wanted it and voted for it, and
 22 none believed the final map would have passed but-for LD-15 meeting that threshold.

23 Sims: Commissioner Sims testified that creating a majority Hispanic CVAP district in LD-
 24 15 was “a priority” for her. Trial Tr. 253:16–19. She noted that the Commission’s final “agreement
 25 entailed a majority Latino CVAP district in the 15th Legislative District,” Trial Tr. 227:16–19, and
 26 believed that the Commissioners “weren’t going to reach an agreement on LD 15, unless” it
 27 contained a majority HCVAP, Trial Tr. 253:13–23.

1 Walkinshaw: Commissioner Walkinshaw recalled, when asked by the Court whether there
 2 were “discussion about racial situations” alongside competitiveness, that there was, alongside “a
 3 lot of different pieces.” Trial Tr. 333:3–14. He could not “recall all the specifics of” the
 4 Commission’s agreement with respect to LD-15, other than that “it reflected a bipartisan
 5 compromise.” Commissioner Graves believed the Commission would “need to draw a major [sic]
 6 Hispanic CVAP district in the 15th LD” in order “to secure [Walkinshaw’s] vote for the final plan.”
 7 Trial Tr. 739:19–740:2.

8 Fain: Commissioner Fain testified he would support a majority HCVAP district in LD-15
 9 to get to an agreement that furthered his statewide goals. Fain, like the other Commissioners, was
 10 incentivized by the deadline to find a compromise. Trial Tr. 457:18–21. He had specific goals for
 11 the Senate legislative districts, namely “statutory compliance on population size, and an increased
 12 sense of competitiveness.” Trial Tr. 438:13–16. Aware of the goals of all the Commissioners, Fain
 13 looked at racial composition during negotiations, focusing on both statewide competitiveness and
 14 race in LD-15.¹⁷ Trial Tr. 438:4–10, 472:13–23. He testified Hispanic CVAP was “more widely
 15 discussed” in Yakima Valley than in other areas, Trial Tr. 510:19–511:3, and that racial
 16 composition for LD-15 was a “very important component of that negotiation[]”—more important
 17 in LD-15 than in any other district. Trial Tr. 511:4–9.

18 For Commissioner Fain, VRA maps were “not incompatible” with his own personal
 19 priorities. Trial Tr. 437:9–14. Pursuant to his own goals and willingness to support a VRA district,
 20 Fain was willing to vote for a majority HCVAP district because “I was very interested in getting
 21 agreement, that furthered the priorities that I had.” Trial Tr. 438:13–16. And so it was; Fain
 22 considered it “[c]ertainly” true that increasing Hispanic CVAP was important to secure the final
 23 vote.” Trial Tr. 474:10–13.

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 26 ¹⁷ It is true and attested at trial that overall partisan competitiveness was a factor for the statewide map. But it was the
 27 ethnic composition of LD-15 that drove the negotiation for that part of the statewide map. In other words, partisan
 competitiveness might have been the uncompromisable districting criterion for the Commissioners for the statewide
 map, but ethnic composition was the uncompromisable criterion for LD-15. It predominated.

1 Graves: Commissioner Graves testified that he was happy to give the Democrats a majority
 2 HCVAP district, and his testimony bore out that he viewed the VRA compliance as making the
 3 map as a whole—including Graves’ partisan goals—more “sellable” to the Democratic
 4 Commissioners. A majority HCVAP in LD-15 was “something we were negotiating toward, that
 5 it would be a district where a majority of the eligible voters would be Hispanic.” Trial Tr. 703:8–
 6 11. During their deliberations, Graves concluded that a majority HCVAP LD-15 was necessary to
 7 win the votes of Sims and Walkinshaw. Trial Tr. 742:11–14; 740:13–18. Graves himself had his
 8 own specific goals of partisan balance, but he felt a “strong internal motivation” to make
 9 concessions, considering the impending deadline. Trial Tr. 723:19–724:1. When it came to where
 10 to give concessions, Graves noted that LD-15 stood apart as the only potential majority-minority
 11 district getting special attention in the State. Trial Tr. 744:2–9. He also testified that during their
 12 negotiations, “[t]he two predominant [metrics] we were discussing were the racial composition of
 13 the [LD-15] district, and its partisan performance.” Trial Tr. 736:18–737:2. And that HCVAP
 14 “probably” was the “primary one we were focusing on.” Trial Tr. 738:3–9. And in the time crunch
 15 leading up to the Commission’s deadline, the Commissioners indeed agreed to make LD-15 at
 16 least fifty percent HCVAP. Trial Tr. 703:25–704:8.

17 Anton Grose, the staffer for Commissioner Graves “often would draft the maps” Graves
 18 requested for his negotiations. Trial Tr. 394:1. In making the maps, Mr. Grose was “very cognizant
 19 of the racial composition for the map.” Trial Tr. 395:6–11. When the Court asked Mr. Grose if he
 20 was “designing the map to hit a certain racial minimum number[,]” he replied that, while not trying
 21 to hit a precise percentage number, “we’d be cognizant” because “we thought that a Hispanic
 22 majority CVAP district would likely be necessary, to get the votes of all four commissioners.”
 23 Trial Tr. 395:11–14. Mr. Grose looked at the racial composition in Yakima Valley “[b]ecause that
 24 was something Commissioner Graves was looking for.” Trial Tr. 395:24–25. In his view, this was
 25 because “that would be a requirement, to get all four commissioners to vote on that final version
 26 of a map. Essentially that was needed to pass a final map.” Trial Tr. 396:1–6.
 27

1 Most revealing, Commissioners and staff representing all four legislative caucuses testified
 2 that the Enacted Plan, adopted on November 15, 2021 moments before the midnight deadline, was
 3 actually an unwritten, handshake “framework.” *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 320:13–19 (Walkinshaw). This
 4 framework was “an agreement upon the partisanship numbers in . . . four [or] five districts.” Trial
 5 Tr. 799:9–20 (O’Neil). The framework included “a combination of relative political performances
 6 in certain areas,” Trial Tr. 450:2–4 (Fain), and “a set of criteria . . . around geographic principles
 7 . . . like the Lummi Nation, and the Nooksack Tribe,” Trial Tr. 324:12–18 (Walkinshaw). The
 8 “final Hispanic CVAP [percentage] for Legislative District 15 [was] one of the components of this
 9 framework,” but this was the *only* district whose racial composition was stipulated in the
 10 framework—a clear indication that racial considerations predominated in LD-15, even if they did
 11 not in the rest of the Enacted Plan. Trial Tr. 743:13–744:4.

12 Commissioner Graves best summarized the feeling that all Commissioners conveyed at
 13 trial: “Very hard . . . to see three of the voting commissioners voting for a map that did not have a
 14 majority Hispanic CVAP district in the Yakima Valley.” Trial Tr. 745:10–12; *see also* Trial Tr.
 15 362:18–21 (Grose: “As time went on, it became apparent that a Yakima Valley district that was
 16 majority Hispanic, by citizens of voting age population, that that would be a requirement to get
 17 support from both Republicans and Democrats.”). That made race the one “criterion that . . . could
 18 not be compromised” in LD-15, meaning it “predominated.” *See Bethune-Hill*, 580 U.S. at 189.
 19 This was not “in bad faith or with discriminatory intent in its redistricting.” *Covington*, 316 F.R.D.
 20 at 129. Indeed, the Commissioners reached a reasoned, good faith compromise to create a
 21 politically competitive statewide map, all four attempting in their own way to follow Washington
 22 and federal law. But for the 50%-plus-one HCVAP in LD-15, however, that map would never have
 23 been approved. This racial threshold was the one factor above all that could not be compromised,
 24 without which the map would have failed.

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1 **B. The Commissioners never performed—nor had performed for them—any
2 sufficient, actual VRA analysis to give them good reasons to think they would
3 have violated the VRA had they not sorted voters by Hispanic ethnicity.**

4 Race predominated, so the State had to show at trial that the Commissioners “had ‘a strong
5 basis in evidence’ for concluding that the” VRA “required [the] action” they took. *Cooper*, 581
6 U.S. at 292 (quoting *Ala. Legis. Black Caucus*, 575 U.S. at 278). The evidence presented at trial
7 did not establish that the Commissioners had “‘good reasons’ to think” they would transgress the
8 VRA if they did not draw race-based district lines. *Id.*

9 Plaintiff Garcia notes that resolution of *Soto Palmer* is not a prerequisite to resolution of
10 his constitutional claim because the relevant “standard does not require the State to show” that the
11 Commission’s “action was ‘actually . . . necessary’ to avoid a statutory violation,” but only that
12 the Commission had “good reasons to believe,” at the time it drew the maps, that “it must use race
13 in order to satisfy the [VRA], ‘even if a court does not find that the actions were necessary for
14 statutory compliance.’” *Bethune-Hill*, 580 U.S. at 194 (quoting *Ala. Legis. Black Caucus*, 575 U.S.
15 at 278). In other words, the proper analysis is not whether the VRA demands a certain type of a
16 district, but whether the map-drawers “had good reasons to believe” the VRA required such. *Id.*
17 Even if this Court finds that LD-15 as presently configured violates the VRA, *but see* discussion
18 *supra* Part II, Plaintiff Garcia can still prevail on his Fourteenth Amendment claim unless the State
19 has demonstrated that the Commission had “good reasons to believe” it needed to elevate racial
considerations in order to comply with the VRA.

20 Here, the State failed to show at trial that (1) the Commissioners “actually” analyzed the
21 *Gingles* preconditions sufficiently before drawing the map; and (2) there was a strong basis that
22 those preconditions were satisfied. *See Cooper*, 581 U.S. at 301–02. On the contrary, the trial
23 demonstrated that the map-drawers did not actually consider whether the VRA required the
24 creation of an HCVAP-minority district in the greater Yakima region, meaning they did not have
25 “‘good reasons’ for thinking the [VRA] demanded such steps.” *Id.* at 301. Thus, the Commission
26 lacked a strong basis in evidence for concluding all three *Gingles* preconditions were met.

1 As the trial did establish, racially-polarized voting, compactness, and other VRA analyses
 2 are intricate and intensive—hence why *Gingles* litigation includes testifying experts that create
 3 long and detailed reports. Casual or summary reports on racially-polarized voting, therefore, are
 4 not sufficient. *See Covington*, 316 F.R.D. 117 (finding “two racial polarization reports” provided
 5 by experts with PhDs were insufficient “to establish a strong basis in evidence”). Nor can a
 6 PowerPoint presentation summarizing findings and making broad conclusions—as the Barreto
 7 “report” frequently cited by the Plaintiffs and Democratic Commissioners turned out to be—create
 8 a strong basis in evidence. *See Trial Exs. 178–179; see also Trial Tr. 235:17–236:1 (Sims); 459:2–*
 9 *12 (Fain: saw Barreto presentation but was not sure of which version).* This presentation could not
 10 itself be used as an expert report in this or any other Section 2 litigation and is therefore *per se*
 11 insufficient to give the Commissioners “good reason” to believe that a VRA district was required.
 12 (Nor could Counsel for Plaintiff Garcia cross-examine Dr. Barreto as an expert witness with
 13 respect to the *Gingles* preconditions because he did not release the methodology or data used in
 14 preparing his slide deck. *Cf. Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(a)(2).*) Lastly, because “[a] group that wants a State
 15 to create a district with a particular design may come to have an overly expansive understanding
 16 of what § 2 demands . . . one group’s demands alone cannot be enough” to give the Commission
 17 “good reasons to believe” that predominating race was “necessary to satisfy § 2 of the Voting
 18 Rights Act.” *Abbott v. Perez*, 138 S. Ct. 2305, 2334 (2018) (quoting *Bethune-Hill*, 580 U.S. at
 19 194); *cf. Trial Tr. 461:11–22 (Fain: Dr. Barreto “appeared to be” advocating “to push districts in*
 20 *a more Democratic direction.”); Trial Tr. 724:25-726:10 (Graves: “I read [Dr. Barreto’s] report”*
 21 *to be him “advocating for a particular partisan outcome” and thought “he might be having an*
 22 *overly expansive reading of what the VRA required.”).*

23 Dr. Barreto’s presentation was flawed in other ways. He did not conduct a full “*Gingles I*”
 24 analysis in his presentation (nor apparently did he intend to). No analysis was performed on the
 25 compactness of the Hispanic population in the greater Yakima region, on communities of interest,
 26 or of any traditional districting principles. In *Milligan*, the Supreme Court’s *Gingles I* analysis
 27 focused on the unified and geographically-compact population in Alabama’s “Black Belt.” 599

1 U.S. ___, slip op. at 13. Dr. Barreto, while focusing on a five-county region surrounding Yakima,
 2 failed to make any showing that the Hispanic communities in that (large) area were geographically
 3 close or shared a cultural connection beyond race alone. *See* Trial Tr. 663:7-664:5. His analysis
 4 was especially anemic compared, for example, to the intricate spatial analysis on compactness
 5 conducted in *Montes*, 40 F. Supp. 3d at 1394-1401 (a case the State is partial towards). One would
 6 expect at least such an intensive spatial analysis for the whole of the greater Yakima area to make
 7 any compelling conclusions on compactness, but there was none. And there is no indication—
 8 whether from the slide deck itself or from Dr. Barreto’s testimony at trial—that the “VRA
 9 Compliant” districts depicted in his slide deck even contained a population remotely close to the
 10 157,200 population target for legislative districts or could be lawfully adopted by the Commission
 11 under Washington law without significant revision. The Commissioners thus had no basis, let
 12 alone a strong one, to believe Latinos in that area were sufficiently compact.

13 Dr. Barreto’s “*Gingles II*” analysis, meanwhile, did not look at any races beyond White
 14 Democrat versus White Republican races, did not look at any primaries, did not look at nonpartisan
 15 general elections with minority candidates, and did not look at general elections with two
 16 candidates from the same party. *See* Trial Exs. 178-179. This mirrored Dr. Collingwood’s self-
 17 fulfilling prophecy approach of only looking at elections that support a preformed narrative. *See*
 18 discussion *supra* Part II.B.2. Yet despite these manifest flaws, the State wrongly contends that the
 19 Commissioners could rely on this supposed “compelling evidence” from Dr. Barreto to conclude
 20 racially polarized voting existed in the Yakima Valley region. (*Soto Palmer* Dkt. # 194 at 27.)

21 The Commissioners did not hire their own expert to analyze VRA compliance, *see, e.g.*,
 22 Trial Tr. 249:2-6 (Sims); *see also* (Dep. Designation of Lisa McLean, *Soto Palmer* Dkt. # 205-1
 23 at 96:7-9) (confirming that the Commission ultimately did not hire a consultant to conduct a VRA
 24 analysis), even though the Commission “probably” had the funding to do so, Trial Tr. 729:5-8
 25 (Graves); *see also* 462:6-8 (Fain: affirming the Commission had the power to hire a nonpartisan
 26 expert). In the absence of a sufficient outside expert’s analysis, the individual Commissioners did
 27 not perform *Gingles* analyses on their own. *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 462:1-5 (Fain); 249:2-9 (Sims); *see*

1 also Trial Tr. 359:18–361:11 (Grose: “Other than what was in the Barreto report” no analysis was
 2 completed by Commissioner Graves, Sims, or their staff regarding the size, distribution or political
 3 cohesion of Latino’s in the Yakima Valley region). The Democratic Commissioners relied on Dr.
 4 Barreto for everything. Trial Tr. 250:17–20 (Sims); 235:17–236:1 (Sims: thought Barreto was
 5 correct that VRA required “above 50 percent Latino voting age population”); *see also* Trial Ex.
 6 174 (Dr. Barreto email to Senate Democratic Caucus staffer: “To be Section 2 compliant, it has to
 7 be over 50.1% CVAP.”) Meanwhile, the Republican Commissioners, worried about Dr. Barreto’s
 8 established partisan leanings, did not rely on Dr. Barreto at all, but looked to a brief legal memo
 9 prepared for them by the law firm Davis Wright Tremaine. *See* Trial Tr. 462:9–22 (Fain); 726:11–
 10 727:3 (Graves). The analysis contained in this memorandum was “predominantly legal, rather than
 11 factual,” and was not based on “factual research regarding demographic trends, voting behavior,
 12 election results, or the other factual assertions in the [Dr. Barreto] Assessment.” Trial Ex. 225.

13 At trial, much was made of the existence of previous litigation in the region that the
 14 Commissioners knew of, such as *Montes v. Yakima*, 40 F. Supp. 3d 1377. But these lawsuits—
 15 brought against cities and counties that comprised only a small subset of the greater Yakima area—
 16 cannot have put the Commissioners on notice about racially polarized voting or compactness for
 17 the entire region. *Montes*, for example, addressed at-large elections for the Yakima City Council,
 18 not state legislative races; the compactness of the Latino population in the *City* of Yakima, not the
 19 entire greater Yakima region; and voting patterns in the *city*, not the whole region. So it makes no
 20 sense to hold that such inapposite cases could provide a “strong basis in evidence” for the
 21 Commissioners to think the *Gingles* preconditions were settled for the entire Yakima area.

22 The result of all this—a conclusory slide deck from a single non-retained partisan expert
 23 presented to only half the Commissioners, a legal memorandum delivered to the other half of the
 24 Commissioners, a smattering of litigation challenging different voting systems in different
 25 jurisdictions, and the absence of any formal VRA analysis conducted in-house or by outside
 26 experts—was rank uncertainty about the requirements of the VRA among Commissioners, far
 27 from the “goods reasons” and “sound basis” that strict scrutiny requires. Commissioner Sims

1 “didn’t get a whole lot of clarity about whether [the Commission] had to create, to comply with
 2 the VRA, a district with a particular Democratic lean,” Trial Tr. 269:23–270:2, and her staffer was
 3 not aware of any racially polarized voting analysis performed with respect to the final map, Dep.
 4 (Dkt. # 205-2 at 208:11–19) (Designation of Osta Davis, *Soto Palmer*). Ali O’Neil, a staffer for
 5 Commissioner Walkinshaw, testified that Commissioner Walkinshaw “would vote for maps that
 6 [he] knew were not VRA-compliant.” Trial Tr. 791:7–16. Commissioner Fain found the Davis
 7 Wright Tremaine memo—which concluded that “§ 2 [of the VRA] does not require the creation
 8 of the majority-minority district advocated by [Dr. Barreto’s] Assessment,” Trial Ex. 225, at 1—
 9 to be “persuasive, as another data point and another point of view in that discussion . . . but not
 10 dispositive,” Trial Tr. 462:25–464:5. Commissioner Graves testified the requirements of the VRA
 11 were “still unclear to [him],” that he felt there was “a lot of uncertainty [and] vagueness about both
 12 what the law allows or requires . . . and how it would actually apply to a particular district,” and
 13 that his only “clear understanding” of what the VRA requires “was that it’s uncertain.” Trial Tr.
 14 683:21–22, 727:8–14, 730:1–6. His staffer, Anton Grose, didn’t feel there was enough
 15 compactness of those populations” to require a majority Hispanic CVAP. Trial Tr. 364:8–365:6.
 16 None of this is sufficient to create “a strong basis in evidence” for the second and third *Gingles*
 17 preconditions. *See Covington*, 316 F.R.D. at 168 (holding the map-drawers lacked a “strong basis
 18 in evidence for the third *Gingles* precondition” because they did not actually assess the effect of
 19 white bloc voting and “misconstrued what the third *Gingles* factor requires”).

20 **V. As remedy, the Court should order the State to adopt, through the Redistricting
 21 Commission and pursuant to existing state law, a new legally-compliant legislative
 22 district map by November 15 that maintains the same overall statewide partisan
 23 balance as the Commission’s original 2021 legislative map but does not sort voters
 24 on the basis of race or ethnicity.**

25 “Federal-court review of districting legislation represents a serious intrusion on the most
 26 vital of local functions. It is well settled that ‘reapportionment is primarily the duty and
 27 responsibility of the State.’” *Miller*, 515 U.S. at 915 (quoting *Chapman v. Meier*, 420 U.S. 1, 27
 (1975)). That’s why “[t]he [Supreme] Court has repeatedly held that redistricting and
 reapportioning legislative bodies is a legislative task which the federal courts should make every

effort not to pre-empt.” *Wise v. Lipscomb*, 437 U.S. 535, 539 (1978) (citing *Connor v. Finch*, 431 U.S. 407, 414-15 (1977); *Chapman*, 420 U.S. at 27; *Gaffney v. Cummings*, 412 U.S. 735, 749 (1973); *Burns v. Richardson*, 384 U.S. 73, 84-85 (1966)). “When a federal court declares an existing apportionment scheme unconstitutional, it is therefore appropriate, whenever practicable, to afford a reasonable opportunity for the legislature to meet constitutional requirements by adopting a substitute measure rather than for the federal court to devise and order into effect its own plan.” *Wise v. Lipscomb*, 437 U.S. at 540; *see also Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533, 586 (1964) (“[L]egislative reapportionment is primarily a matter for legislative consideration and determination, and . . . judicial relief becomes appropriate only when a legislature fails to reapportion according to federal constitutional requisites in a timely fashion after having had an adequate opportunity to do so.”).

This deference to state legislatures to devise a substitute redistricting map applies both to apportionment plans that are found unconstitutional, and to plans that violate Section 2 of the VRA. *See, e.g., Singleton v. Merrill*, 582 F. Supp. 3d 924, 1032-33 (N.D. Ala. 2022) (per curiam), *aff’d*, *Allen v. Milligan*, 599 U.S. _____. “Following a determination that a redistricting plan violates Section Two [of the Voting Rights Act], ‘[s]tates retain broad discretion in drawing districts to comply with the mandate of § 2.’” *Id.* (quoting *Shaw*, 517 U.S. at 917 n.9). States need not rely on a plaintiff’s remedial plan, nor must they “draw the precise compact district that a court would impose in a successful § 2 challenge.” *Bush*, 517 U.S. at 978 (cleaned up). Instead, “States retain a flexibility that federal courts enforcing § 2 lack, both insofar as they may avoid strict scrutiny altogether by respecting their own traditional districting principles, and insofar as deference is due to their reasonable fears of, and to their reasonable efforts to avoid, § 2 liability.” *Id.*

Also, while the relevant caselaw refers generally to “the legislature” as the proper body to redraw defective maps, “[f]or redistricting purposes, . . . ‘the Legislature’ d[oes] not mean the representative body alone.” *Ariz. State Legis. v. Ariz. Indep. Redistricting Comm’n*, 576 U.S. 787, 805 (2015) (citing *Ohio ex rel. Davis v. Hildebrant*, 241 U.S. 565, 569 (1916)). Indeed, “redistricting ‘involves lawmaking in its essential features and most important aspect’” and such

1 lawmaking “must be in accordance with the method which the State has prescribed for legislative
 2 enactments. *Id.* at 807 (quoting *Smiley v. Holm*, 285 U.S. 355, 366-67 (1932)). In Washington, the
 3 Legislature has delegated its redistricting powers to the Commission through a voter-approved
 4 state constitutional amendment. *See WASH. CONST. art. II, § 43*, as amended by *WASH. CONST.*
 5 amend. 74, S.J. Res. 103, 48th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 1983) (enacted, approved by voters Nov.
 6 8, 1983). Under state law, “[l]egislative and congressional districts may not be changed or
 7 established except pursuant to” article II, section 43 of the state constitution. *WASH. CONST. art.*
 8 II, § 43(11) (emphasis added). And while the Commission ceased to exist on July 1, 2022, *see*
 9 *RCW 44.05.110(2)*, “the legislature may . . . adopt legislation reconvening the commission for the
 10 purpose of modifying the redistricting plan,” *RCW 44.05.120(1)*; *see also WASH. CONST. art. II,*
 11 § 43(8).¹⁸ If the Commission is reconvened, it “shall complete the modification to the redistricting
 12 plan as soon as possible, but no later than sixty days after the effective date of the legislation
 13 reconvening the commission.” *RCW 44.05.120(4)*. The process for modifying a redistricting plan
 14 generally follows the same pattern as ordinary decennial redistricting. “At least three of the voting
 15 members shall approve the modification to the redistricting plan.” *Id.* “Following approval of a
 16 modification to the redistricting plan by the commission, the legislature has the next thirty days
 17 during any regular or special session to amend the commission’s modification. Any amendment
 18 by the legislature must be approved by an affirmative vote in each house of two-thirds of the
 19 members elected or appointed thereto.” *RCW 44.05.120(5)*. “The commission’s modification to
 20 the redistricting plan, with any amendments approved by the legislature” shall constitute the new
 21 redistricting plan. *RCW 44.05.120(6)*.

22 Washington law provides a clear, unambiguous method for amending legislative district
 23 maps outside of the standard decennial reapportionment cycle. And caselaw is likewise
 24 unambiguous in holding that states should have the first opportunity to enact a remedial legislative
 25

26 ¹⁸ Although the Legislature’s next regular session is not scheduled to begin until January 8, 2024, “[s]pecial legislative
 27 sessions may be convened” by either “proclamation of the governor” or “resolution of the legislature.” *WASH. CONST.*
art. II, § 12(2); see also Joint Rules of the Senate and the House of Representatives, H. Con. Res. 4401, 68th Leg.,
Reg. Sess., Rule 29 (Wash. 2023).

1 apportionment scheme if the original plan is found to violate the Constitution or the VRA, and that
 2 states need not rely on a plaintiff's remedial or demonstrative maps when doing so. Therefore, in
 3 order to avoid "intrud[ing] upon state policy any more than necessary," *White v. Weiser*, 412 U.S.
 4 783, 795 (1973) (quoting *Whitcomb v. Chavis*, 403 U.S. at 160), if the Plaintiffs prevail on either
 5 of their claims under the VRA, or if Mr. Garcia prevails on his claim under the Fourteenth
 6 Amendment, this Court should order any remedial maps be enacted by the State of Washington
 7 through the Commission, as reconstituted pursuant to Washington law.

8 If Mr. Garcia's Fourteenth Amendment challenge is upheld, the Court should order that
 9 the remedial map be drawn by the reconstituted Commission in a race-neutral manner. By drawing
 10 a new legislative district map in a constitutionally-compliant and race-neutral manner, the
 11 Commission might conduct a proper VRA analysis, the results of which would result in more
 12 defensible boundaries for Yakima area legislative districts under the VRA. In either event, it is for
 13 the State (through the Commission) to address the constitutional violation in the first instance, not
 14 for the Plaintiffs to show that an already unconstitutional map may have possibly complied with
 15 the VRA when it was enacted.

16 For any remedial map that is ordered—whether in *Garcia*, *Soto Palmer* or both—the Court
 17 should require the new map be approved by the Commission by November 15, 2023. This deadline
 18 provides a sufficient window of time for a special session of the Legislature to be convened, so
 19 that the Legislature can in turn "reconven[e] the [redistricting] commission for the purpose of
 20 modifying the redistricting plan," which modification must be completed "no later than sixty days
 21 after the effective date of the legislation reconvening the commission." RCW 44.05.120. A
 22 November 15 deadline for the reconvened Commission's modified plan is consistent with deadline
 23 under state law for ordinary decennial redistricting. Cf. WASH. CONST. art. II, sec. 43(6); RCW
 24 44.05.100(1). Such a deadline provides the Legislature with the opportunity to make any necessary
 25 adjustments to the map produced by the Commission during the first 30 days of the 2024 regular
 26 legislative session (or any earlier special session that may be called), as is also consistent with state
 27 law. Compare RCW 44.05.120(5)-(6) with RCW 44.05.100(2)-(3). And this timeline easily allows

1 for the new legislative district map to be in place before the 2024 legislative elections, with ample
 2 cushion for the Secretary of State and county election administrators to make any required
 3 adjustments to precinct boundaries and other back-end systems.¹⁹

4 Finally, because legislative “reapportionment is primarily the duty and responsibility of the
 5 State,” *Chapman*, 420 U.S. at 27 (citing *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. at 586; *Md. Comm. for Fair*
 6 *Representation v. Tawes*, 377 U.S. 656, 676 (1964)), and because state law forbids redistricting
 7 from “purposely . . . favor[ing] or discriminat[ing] against any political party,” WASH. CONST. art.
 8 II, § 43(5); RCW 44.05.090(5), then any order by this Court for a new legislative map should
 9 require that such remedial map keep intact the overall partisan balance of the Enacted Plan. At
 10 trial, Commissioners from both parties testified that partisan outcomes were a key goal of their
 11 negotiations, and that partisan metrics were an integral component of the negotiation process. *See*,
 12 *e.g.*, Trial Tr. 226:25–227:9 (Sims) 411:3–9 (Grose); 443:22–24, 456:3–10 (Fain: “I was very
 13 interested in making as many districts in the state more politically competitive, across party
 14 lines.”); 721:20–722:15 (Graves: “[M]y top priority was trying to draw more competitive
 15 districts.”). These Commissioners testified they would not agree to unfavorable partisan changes
 16 in one district without obtaining a favorable partisan change in a different district. *See, e.g.*, Trial
 17 Tr. 252:13-23 (Sims); 387:7-388:1 (Grose: “Everything is always a negotiation, all the time.”);
 18 447:3-10 (Fain); 703:7-22, 707:15-23 (Graves). Indeed, the final map produced by the
 19 Commission only came about because, at the eleventh hour, Commissioners were able to consent
 20 to a “framework” that primarily consisted of agreed-to partisan performance targets for various
 21 legislative districts. *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 228:20–229:5, 230:7–14 (Sims); 449:23–450:7, 495:7–22
 22 (Fain); 743:13–744:9 (Graves); 799:12–20 (O’Neil: “It was an agreement upon . . . the partisanship
 23 numbers in . . . four, five districts.”). And a partisan performance target proved necessary to
 24

25 ¹⁹ With respect to the 2022 election cycle, the Secretary of State indicated—which the Plaintiffs did not challenge—that legislative district boundaries would need to be finalized by March 28. (See Dkt. # 66 at 7; Dkt. # 50 at 14.) According to the Secretary of State, “[i]n order to implement any new state legislative maps from the 2024 election cycle without disrupting Washington’s elections, new maps must be finalized no later than March 25.” (See Dkt. # 178 at 2.)

1 achieve compromise with respect to LD-15 itself—with Republican Commissioners assenting to
 2 drawing LD-15 as a majority HCVAP district in exchange for Democratic Commissioners
 3 agreeing to drawing it as a Republican-leaning district. *See, e.g.*, Trial Tr. 252:24–253:9, 282:13–
 4 18 (Sims); 326:22–24 (Walkinshaw); 474:10–13 (Fain); 745:7–12 (Graves).

5 Thus, if the Court finds that LD-15 must be modified, it should require that any changes to
 6 the partisan composition of that district be offset by partisan changes to other legislative districts
 7 in the modified statewide legislative plan. As the Washington State Supreme Court recognized
 8 following the 2021 process, “[r]edistricting raises largely political questions best addressed in the
 9 first instance by commissioners appointed by the legislative caucuses where negotiation and
 10 compromise is necessary for agreement.” *In re Order Regarding the Wash. State Redistricting*
 11 *Comm’n’s Letter to the Supreme Court on Nov. 16, 2021*, 504 P.3d 795, 796 (Wash. 2021) (mem.).
 12 To *ex post* alter the partisan makeup of only a single legislative district would vitiate the
 13 “negotiation and compromise” that the Commissioners found “necessary for agreement,” *id.*, and
 14 would violate the state law proscription against redistricting changes that “favor or discriminate
 15 against any political party,” WASH. CONST. art. I, § 43(5); RCW 44.05.090(5). It would invite a
 16 moral hazard for future redistricting commissioners to attempt to achieve their desired partisan
 17 aims by cynically trading away at the commission that which they expected to regain in the
 18 courts.²⁰ And most concerningly, it would undermine the entire bipartisan and collaborative spirit
 19 of the Commission, a feature that sets Washington’s redistricting process apart from the vast
 20 majority of other states where partisan gerrymandering runs rampant. *See, e.g.*, Nicholas
 21 Stephanopoulos, *Reforming Redistricting: Why Popular Initiatives to Establish Redistricting*
 22 *Commissions Succeed or Fail*, 23 J.L. & POL. 331, 333 (2007) (“[O]n the basis of political theory
 23 and empirical evidence, . . . the bipartisan commission is, on the whole, well-designed to prevent
 24 gerrymandering and improve redistricting.”)

25
 26 ²⁰ Indeed, it appears at least one Commissioner was prepared to engage in such cynical gamesmanship, by voting for
 27 a map he believed to be illegal and expecting the courts to award his caucus an additional seat in subsequent litigation.
See Trial Tr. 791:7–16; *cf. Cooper*, 581 U.S. at 335 (Alito, J., concurring in part and dissenting in part) (warning of
 “losers in the redistricting process [who] seek to obtain in court what they could not achieve in the political arena”).

For these reasons, if the Court finds in favor of the Plaintiffs in either case, it should order the State to adopt, through the Redistricting Commission and pursuant to existing state law, a new legally-compliant legislative district map by November 15, 2023, that maintains the same overall statewide partisan balance as the Commission’s original Enacted Plan.

DATED this 12th day of July, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

s/ Andrew R. Stokesbary

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this day I electronically filed the foregoing document with the Clerk of the Court of the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington through the Court's CM/ECF System, which will serve a copy of this document upon all counsel of record.

DATED this 12th day of July, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

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